

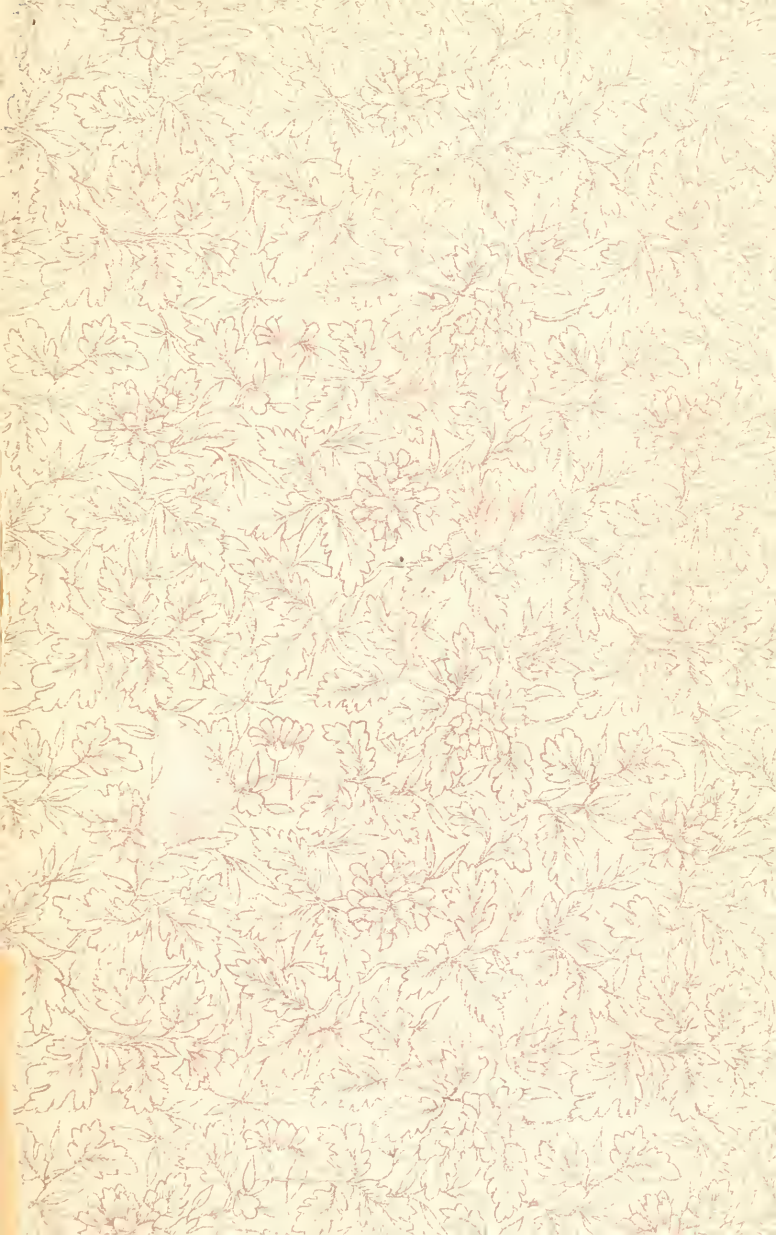
# THE FORTUNES OF WORDS

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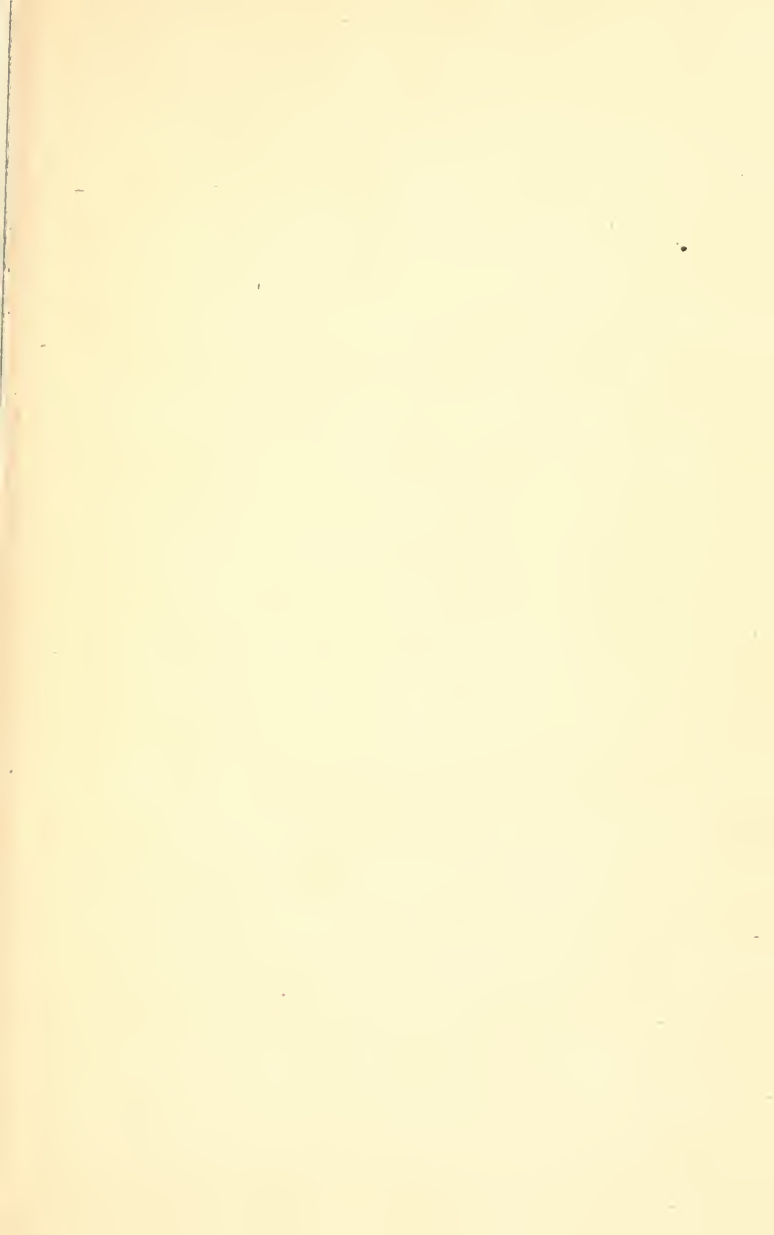
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THE  
FORTUNES OF WORDS

LETTERS TO A LADY

BY  
FEDERICO GARLANDA, PH.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE PHILOSOPHY OF WORDS."

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A. LOVELL & CO.

1687

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# THE FORTUNES OF WORDS

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## FIRST LETTER.

Introduction—The Science of Language—Its Importance—  
Its Connection with the Study of Man and History—  
Words and Things.

---

DEAR FRIEND—Ever since I began to communicate with you on the subject of my studies, there is no kind of encouragement that I have not received from you. You are so earnest, your mind, instinct with womanly loveliness, is so eager and open to wide and noble sympathies, that your very listening is an inspiration. I never can think of you without my mind going back to the great women of the Renaissance, who could hold their own in discussing Greek philosophy or mathematics with the greatest savants of the time, and yet did not lose one point of that delicacy and sweetness, of that instinctive love for beautiful and

graceful things, which are the crowning charms of womanhood. I am sure you will not bear me any grudge if I try to put on paper, with as much order as will be possible, some of those results of the science of language about which we have talked so often, and address these letters to you. On my part it is simply a debt of gratitude. It was in my conversations with you that the idea of these letters originated. Let, then, the fruit go back to her who had so large a part in the planting of the tree.

It would be altogether superfluous to discourse to you upon the importance of these studies. They have *always* been very important, since studies in words are, after all, studies in things. Besides, they sharpen one's mind and accustom it to observation, comparison, fine analysis and subtle discrimination. In the words of Scaliger, the great antiquarian and philologist, "the sifting of these subtleties, although it is of no use to make machines for grinding corn, frees the mind from the rust of ignorance, and sharpens it for other matters." But *now*, in the light of modern researches and methods, it is a new world entirely that opens before us.



He who follows, even superficially, the movement of modern studies and compares it with that of the last century, cannot fail to notice a wide difference. Philosophizing was the prominent characteristic of the eighteenth century. They discussed and dreamed about mankind, religion, law, language and the universe. Systems were evolved out of general principles which too often had no foundation except in the fancies of their authors. To-day, on the contrary, the tendencies of all science are strictly historical. We have grown sceptical and diffident of philosophical systems. We do not care so much to listen to abstract and subjective theories about the nature of society, of law, of religion, of the world, as we strive to know how these things were formed, where they come from, how they grow and live. We have a feeling that only by being able to account for their origin and growth, we may be able at all to learn their essence. Hence that spirit of observation and research which, as it was aptly remarked, has made of history a science and of all science a history. It was Gœthe, I think, who said that the day would come when

we would not ask the ox *why* it has its horns, but *how* it has come to have them. That time, we may say, has come. New sciences spring up, all in accordance with this new spirit: geology, palæontology, embryology, comparative anatomy, all aim to give us a *history* of life in the world. We all have an impression that there is a universal and lawful continuity in all the phenomena of life, in the biological as well as in the moral world. The adage of the ancients that *natura non facit saltus* never was so thoroughly understood as it is nowadays. Now, more than ever, we are aware of the absolute dependence of to-day on the yesterday; and (let me make this remark in passing) they do not read well the spirit of their age who, for whatever cause and in whatever field, preach revolution instead of insisting on a continuous gradual development.

Whenever a crisis happens in the commercial or political world, the first thing we require is to investigate *how* it grew, what brought it about. A physician is not satisfied with his diagnosis if he does not go back for years and generations and hunt out all that can be

known about the preceding maladies of his patient, his father, mother and ancestors. This feeling that to know one thing truly implies to know its origin is so general, that we have changed the sense of the word 'etymology.' 'Etymology' means exactly the exposition or explanation of the *true* meaning of words (*etymos*, true); but we have bent it to mean the 'origin of words.' In fact, if the 'true meaning' of a word and the 'origin' of a word are not exactly convertible terms, the latter is always a good clue to the former. We must add, however, that modern philology is no longer satisfied with the origin of words alone; it wants to know their entire history.

This way of looking at the world *historically* is the most far-reaching achievement of the modern mind. Whether we shut our eyes or keep them open, there is written on everything 'why?' but the 'why' cannot be answered if the 'how?' and 'whence?' are not known. The philosopher says: 'All that is, is,' but the proposition, 'all that is, was not,' or at least, 'all that is, was not as it is,' is equally true. Hence the question which suggests itself

at all moments of our life : ‘ How has it come to be so ? ’ The trees and flowers which adorn your garden did not exist once, nor did their ancestors have the same shapes and colors ; *how* did they become what they are ? Your beautiful horse, of which you are so fond and so proud, would find in his pedigree strange and unlooked-for relations. So would the dog which lies at your feet and looks up at you with eyes so mild and loving, forgetful entirely of the primitive fierce savagery of his kin. The laws which govern us, this world of society with which we trammel and fetter each other on all sides, have not always been what they are ; what were they, then ? How did they change ?

Indeed, we have only to reflect, to lift ourselves a moment above the material and common-place pursuits of our dull lives, to have the historical problem facing us from everywhere.

We do generally concern ourselves with the future far more than with the past ; which, after all, is a good and sensible thing. But we should not forget that the future is but a continuation or a consequence of the present, and the present is in its turn both a continuation and a conse-

quence of the past. We do not know what a man is going to do if we have not seen him at work before. We cannot tell how high a water course is going to run uphill if we do not know from what height it fell. In the physical as well as in the moral world, the key to the future is in the past.

Concerning the enormous problem of the origin of life, I heard once a lecturer go off on a sentence like this: "I do not care to know the preface to my cradle, but I would like to know the appendix to my grave." It was received with clamorous applause, as such oxymorons generally are; but it was mere rhetoric after all. In his own clumsy metaphor, if we could read the preface to our cradle, the appendix to our grave would read by itself.

It is this universality and necessity of the historical problem that gives the new science of language an importance and a reach inferior to no other science. The whole man, his mind, his heart, his understanding, his beliefs, his passions, all that he is and has been, is to be found in language. Let us be more exact; not the *whole man* is in language, because a great

many things there are in ourselves which are not known, or but dimly known, to ourselves, which, therefore, are not expressed by words. But it is safe to say that all that part of man which is known to man, is to be found in language. In language, then, we have one of the greatest, the most direct, the most intimate means for the study of man.

By tracing words back to their primitive formation and meaning, we may learn how some deep and most complex ideas embodied in our words were first formed and conceived. All the words pertaining to the life of the soul can, thus analyzed, throw floods of light on the history of our moral conceptions. On the other hand, by following words downward from their origin to their present use, we can watch the human mind in its action, surprise it in its inmost ways of working ; to say nothing of the great historical, ethnographical and literary problems which are connected with and enlightened by such investigations. Even putting the practical utility of these studies aside, what a satisfaction to have before the eyes of our mind the linguistic map of the civilized world ;

to see the mainsprings from which the streams of modern speeches flow ; to follow them step by step, when they cross or diverge, widen or narrow, merge into others or disappear. What a satisfaction for the geologist to look at a hill and to be able to tell in what age of the earth and how it was formed, what materials it is made of, what kind of vegetation it was covered with, what animals sought shelter in its dens or lay under the shade of its trees ! The same does the *glottologist* with words. (Allow me to introduce into English this word, which is better and not so misleading as 'linguist.' Linguist should be called he who knows and speaks several languages ; 'glottologist' is the student of the science of language. There are linguists who speak half a dozen languages or more, but do not know anything about the science of language. The glottologist does not care to learn to speak several languages ; what he aims at, is to see into the grammatical structure and word-formation of as many languages as he can get hold of.) With a fragmentary and well-worn word, which, to the untrained, means very little, the glottologist goes back centuries and

centuries, to the first form of that word ; then he follows it in all its metamorphoses and derivations ; traces out its connection with hundreds of other words in different languages, its original meaning and the various other meanings with which it has been clothed in its centennial life.

You read in your Bible (Deut. xxi., 4), " And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither *cared* nor sown."

If you ask what this *cared* is, grammarians will tell you that it is the past form of an *obsolete* verb, to *car*, which means ' to plough.' Obsolete is about all that they can tell you. If you take a Greek or Roman coin to an antiquarian, and he tells you that it is an ancient coin, an obsolete coin, no longer accepted in common currency, would you be satisfied? Still, it is astonishing how many persons are ready to shut their dictionary and declare " they know all about it " when they have learnt that a word is " obsolete." A glottologist will tell you that this obsolete verb ' to ear,' was in Middle English *erien*, from the Anglo-Saxon



*erian*, which is to be referred to an Indo-European root 'ar,' meaning 'to plough.' From this same root we have the Greek verb *ar-oo*, to plough, the Latin *ar-are*, and *ar-a-trum*, the plough; our adjective *ar-able*, that can be ploughed, and very likely the substantive *earth*, the 'tilled.'

Nor are these researches without a practical bearing. Imagine a student who undertakes to learn a foreign language. If he has not even the slightest training in comparative philology, he is obliged to learn almost all words one by one, mechanically, as so many algebraic signs. By the light of the science of language, on the contrary, he can recognize in each word a member of a certain family, a blossom, a leaf, a branch, which he can easily refer to the trunk with which he is familiar.

## SECOND LETTER.

Etymology and History of Words—Words and their Life—  
Linguistic Maps—Beauty and Difficulty of the Science of  
Language.

---

I HAVE no intention to follow rigorously, in our conversations, any logical order, because I know that you would not like it. In your eagerness for all intellectual food, you retain an amiable, almost, I would say, pert independence of spirit, which is so thoroughly feminine, and makes you so lovely even in your outbursts of impatience. We shall go on leisurely, letting the subject itself lead us onward, rather than break it up and enchase it into a prefixed frame; just as we did that evening on the piazza, in your villa by the sea, while the skies were aglow with the glories of sunset, the wind was sighing through the pine-trees, and the breakers were dashing their foam at our feet, surging and chanting all the while their eternal monotone; do you remember? I hope you

have not forgotten those delightful hours; *I* never will. The breakers were ever coming, and breaking, and roaring, and seemed to sing: "We are strong, strong, strong! We come from afar, far, far!" The lengthening shadows were bending over them, and all Nature seemed to blend and merge in that immense embrace. There was a pause in our conversation, as happens. You gazed awhile over the dark waters, thoughtfully, and then you said, half shuddering, and drawing closer your wraps (that pretty red shawl, so lovely on your white dress): "I wonder where they come from!" The mood of the hour was so serious that I ventured upon a joke. "Where they come from? that's the business of etymology." And you, sharply, "O, you horrid pedant!" Still, I know it did not displease you very much, as you turned soon, laughing, and said: "Go on, please!"

Why do I thus prattle on, away from my subject? In truth, I don't know, unless it is because one likes to go over as often as possible the hours that one did enjoy the best. In the future, however, I will be more severe with myself and keep closer to our subject.

I mentioned that we must not be satisfied with knowing the origin of words, but we must investigate their whole history. Their origin, important as it is, is only the first link of the chain. But from that distant point, how did words travel down to our days? Through what metamorphoses of sound and meaning did they assume their present forms and significations? It is important to know the fountain-head of a river, but to have a full knowledge of the river itself, we must follow it down its course, see by what affluents its waters are swollen, through what lands it runs, down what falls it leaps, into what sea it pours and merges. This is not an idle comparison. It is exactly what glottology aims at: to present, as in a clear map, the course of languages; to show us whence they start, whither they run, how they mingle and separate, how they live and die.

Glottology, aided by ethnology and palæontology, has carried the lamp of investigation far back into ages where all history is silent. In its light, the most sequestered valleys, the most insignificant villages have given up their secrets:

“We were,” they say, “the abode of such and such a race ; such and such a family of men lived here and left their names with us before other families came which drove them away, to be driven in their turn by others.” The brooks, the cliffs, the mountains, tell us, by their names, the story of races, of whom we have scarcely any other memory left ; while in the arid collections of words, where, as in faded herbaria, are recorded and classified the spoils of languages long since dead, we can read the earliest history of our own race and the civilization of an age so remote that, in comparison, Rome and Greece seem to become our contemporaries. To what does the antiquity of Cæsar and Cicero dwindle away, since we can go back to a time when the remote forefathers of those who were to people Italy and subsequently to found Rome, were still pasturing their flocks in the high plains of Asia ? Indeed, the philological and archæological researches of this century have so lengthened the domain of history that they seem to have altered our perspective of time, and made very near to us that which once appeared to be so far away. To one who is

familiar with the Vedas, Virgil and Horace seem to belong to modern literature. It happens with time, after all, as it happens with space. The ideas of farness and nearness depend entirely on habit. In Europe it seems quite a journey to go from Paris to Rome, and a good deal of preparation and leave-taking is gone through before setting out. The travelled American, familiar with the distances of a boundless continent, crosses the ocean as one would go to his country-seat, and does not think much of taking a trip to Australia.

Thus it is that the science of language, itself an historical science, is one of the most valid auxiliaries of history. Those who think of it as a dry, uninteresting study of roots with a sleepy accompaniment of declensions and conjugations, do not understand it aright; or if they have got some knowledge of it, they fail to see the great green fields which it leads to.

One might, however, deceive one's self by thinking that because the results and prospects of the science of language are grand and alluring, their pursuit also is always delightful, easy and entertaining. We must remember that the Hill

of Science has at the top a green refreshing plain, lighted by the sun of Truth and sweet to rest upon. But its slopes are awfully steep, thick with stones and thorns, and altogether such that years of hard work and good will and mutual help are required to advance a few steps. The science of language is no exception to the rule. Rather, if we look back to the way in which even the greatest minds, when dealing with language, went stumbling around, down to the present century, we must conclude that its path is even harder than others, and thick with difficulties, snares and pitfalls.

### THIRD LETTER.

Method and Facts—Analysis and Comparison—Ancient Etymologists and their Stumblings—Roots and their Growth—The Indo-European Languages—The Position of the English Language—Etymological Instances.

---

IN the Science of Language, as in all science, to reach a positive result was not possible before a method was found. In science, as well as in life, method is everything. 'Method' is "the way after" (*metá*, after; *hodós*, way), the way of following up a clue, an idea, orderly, clearly, consistently, without jerks or jumps or deviations. It is the thread out of the labyrinth, without which even the most willing, the most skilful and keen-eyed, will go round and round, tiring themselves, tearing their own flesh and bleeding, to find themselves, at last, ex-



hausted and powerless, there whence they started.

A method for the science of language was found when it was at last proposed to apply to it the great principle of common-sense, namely to proceed from what we know to what we do not know ; to begin to study the facts which lie around us before devising systems to explain them. Quite simple, you will say ; why did they not apply it at the very start ? Yes, as simple as the egg of Columbus, and equally difficult. To poor, awkward, human minds, are not things most simple the most difficult ? Have they not always been so ? In the political field, for instance, what is more simple and at the same time more useful than the idea that neighboring states should live at peace and help each other to increase their wealth and happiness, rather than live like cats and dogs and give the best strength of their minds and bodies to thoughts and works of mutual destruction ? Still centuries elapsed, full of unspeakable misery, hatred and wars, until, about one hundred years ago, to a few good

•

*bourgeois* the idea occurred that perhaps an arrangement could be devised by means of which some states might live side by side in peace, and some good sense be brought also into the transaction of international affairs. Hence, from this *simple* and very plain idea, the confederation of the United States of North America, the grandest phenomenon in the political history of the world.

And in social life, for instance, what would be more *simple* than to do away with many of the useless, ridiculous, tedious regulations which embitter, and take away nine-tenths of the sweetness and real, soul-felt enjoyment of social intercourse, which are a nuisance to the thousands, a subject of laughter and ennui to the clever, an advantage to nobody? Still, far from getting rid of them, we seem bound to increase them every year, and to get farther and farther from that 'plain living,' which is the inseparable companion of 'high thinking.'

We must not wonder, then, much less feel tempted to look down on our predecessors,

because they stumbled long in their way in the pursuit of science, and did not see the clue which lay quite at their feet. At the same time, it will not be useless to look at their method and some of their mistakes. Their mistakes will at least teach us how to avoid them, and their method, with its necessary results, will be a good test for our own.

But, first, let me state briefly what the new method is, and which are the new instruments of research that are put at our disposition.

It is necessary, as I have just mentioned, to start from the study of facts. The facts to be studied are words in all their forms, namely, vocabularies and grammars. The method is analytical and historico-comparative. When we take up a word, we must not only consider its present form; in many cases nothing could be made out of it. We must investigate through what successive forms it has gone, and, secondly, we must compare it with cognate words in cognate languages. We must not *imagine* intermediate forms; we must really go

to the historical documents of languages, and collect and compare the forms which are found to exist or to have existed. There is an abyss between the old school, if they deserve such a name, of etymologists and the modern methods. The former, as a rule, did not trouble themselves with researches of this kind ; when they wanted to know the etymology of a word, they looked around for another word which had with it some affinity either in sound or meaning, and having once assumed that this was the original word, they simply *imagined* the intermediate forms which had to serve as links between that and the supposed derivation.

The chief results strictly linguistical obtained by the new science may be reduced to two : one concerns the words in themselves, the other languages in general. First, it has demonstrated that every word has at its kernel, as its essential element, a *root*, that is to say a sound with a general indefinite meaning. These primitive sounds are not many, and from them all our words are formed. In the second place,

it has been able to give a classification of languages, at least of the most important of them. A great result this, indeed, if we consider that rational classification is the final scope and crown of all science ; a result which sums up all the work done at the same time that it lays down the plan and points the way for the work to come.

I will not repeat here the general classification of languages. I have given it, as I am sure you remember, in the “Philosophy of Words,” and, at any rate, it can be found in every book on the science of language. But I think it worth our while to exhibit briefly the classification of the Indo-European languages, because into this field chiefly our subsequent investigations will proceed.

The Indo-European or Aryan languages comprehend the most important languages spoken nowadays in Asia, Europe, and America, by the most civilized peoples. They are divided into seven great groups :

- |              |   |                      |
|--------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. Sanskrit, | } | Eastern group. Asia. |
| 2. Iranic,   |   |                      |

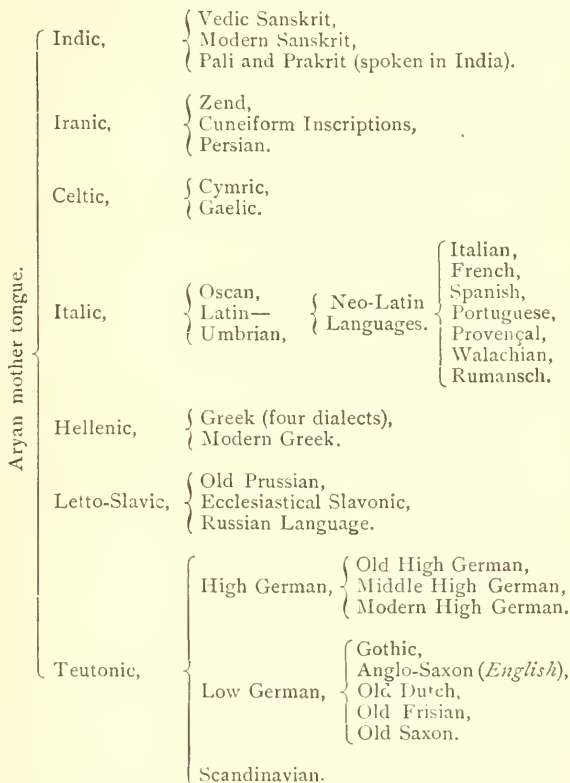
- |              |   |                                       |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 3. Hellenic, | } | Western group.<br>Europe and America. |
| 4. Italic,   |   |                                       |
| 5. Slavonic, |   |                                       |
| 6. Teutonic, |   |                                       |
| 7. Celtic.   |   |                                       |

It appears that all of these groups descend from one common mother language, now extinct, which was spoken in the high plains of Central Asia, from which the people who spoke these several languages separated and went upon their migrations, two branches eastward, and five westward. These separations did not take place all at one time, but first one branch split and then another, and another, the latter pressing the former onward, farther from the common stock.

These seven languages then are sisters, or rather they were, as all of them are now dead; and the languages that sprang from them are also cognate, although their kinship is of a more remote degree and less easy to detect.

If we care to see at a glance what languages

are derived from each of them, the following diagram will help us :



Please give particular attention to two of these groups, the Italic and the Teutonic. See

how prolific they are, how numerous and various their dialects. Remember that they represent the languages of some of the strongest and highest nations in the world. Much indeed of what is great and worthy in modern civilization is represented by these two families. Let me insist also on the exceptionally fortunate position of English. While the other intellectual languages of modern Europe belong entirely either to the Teutonic family, as German, or to the Latin family, as French, English shares the good things of both families. Its grammar and, so to say, its substructure, are Teutonic, but its vocabulary belongs in great part to Latin.

The above diagram, where we have the pedigree of all the Indo-European languages, shows where we have to look for the etymology of our words. If we have, for instance, a word belonging to a French dialect, we must compare it with the forms it has assumed in other French dialects, then in the other Neo-Latin dialects, then with the form it had or the word from which it is derived, in Latin. The Latin word we can compare with cognate words in the seven Indo-European groups, and finally



we can determine the Aryan root from which all those forms are derived.

Take, for instance, the French word "père," father. This word occurs in an endless variety of forms in all the Neo-Latin dialects. The typical forms, however, are these: 'Père,' Northern Italian dialects 'pare,' Italian 'padre,' Latin *pa-trē(m)*. The Latin stem is properly *pa-ter*, where *-ter* is a suffix, to be found in all Aryan languages, denoting the 'agent,' and *pa-* is a primitive Aryan root meaning 'to feed,' 'to support.' Hence 'pater' is the 'feeder,' the 'supporter.' Following up this same word in other Aryan languages, we find *patér* in Greek, *pidar* in Persian, *pitri* in Sanskrit, and (according to Grimm's law, of which I shall say more hereafter), *fadar* in Gothic, *fæder* in Anglo-Saxon, *father* in English, *Vater* in German, each one of which has given rise to many derivations, such as 'fatherly,' 'fatherland,' 'patria,' 'paternal,' etc. So, taking one simple root (*pa*), we can follow it step by step through all its transformations and proliferations in all the dialects directly or indirectly connected with the primitive Aryan speech. It

is easy to see then the wide scope of modern linguistic researches. Their method is a well-grounded, matter-of-fact proceeding, their field is immense, but at the same time so well defined and explored that the glottologist goes over it with the same surety as an intelligent traveller goes through a land of which he holds in his hands a good map. It is also very easy to see that the results of these investigations must be such as the poor attempts of former etymologists, feeling their way in utter darkness through a labyrinth of which they knew neither the end nor the beginning, neither the belongings nor the plan, have nothing to compare with for a moment. They had no idea of roots, and very confused ones about suffixes and prefixes. Their treatment of the phonetic principles was rude and empirical. Even when they happened to hit upon a right point, they did not know it, as they had no criterion by which to test the value of their discovery. They were just like a sea-captain who has lost his compass, and, through the darkness of the night, cannot find his position; he will steer to the right or to the left, as chance suggests, but when can he

tell that he is right? A mere cabin-boy knows just as much as he.

To see better the difference between the old and the new methods, let us look into the etymology of the words 'père' and 'father,' as given by two old etymologists. Menage, the celebrated etymologist, throws 'father,' 'père,' 'pater,' 'padre,' etc., together with 'papa,' of which he says: "Il est formé (comme maman) par la nature dans la bouche des enfants, et il n'en faut pas chercher ailleurs l'etymologie." As for the suffix *ter*, "Il n'est qu'une addition, ou pour mieux dire, une corruption du mot, laquelle ne vient point de leur nature, mais de l'institution des hommes."

Skinner, in his "Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanæ," derives English 'father,' Anglo-Saxon 'fæder,' German 'vater,' etc., all "immediately from Latin 'pater,' mediately from Greek 'patér.'" The Greek word then is derived either from *paomai*, to acquire, or from *speiro*, to sow. About the formation of the word *pater*, whether it consists of several elements or not, nothing is said. The English *father*, he adds, may also be very easily (com-

modissime) derived from the Danish verb *feder*, to nourish, or *foder*, to generate. It would not be easy to accumulate more mistakes in so few lines.

## FOURTH LETTER.

The Idea of Root—Grimm's Law—The Root *ak* and its Derivations—The Root *pa*—The Root *bha*—The Root *wid*.

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WE have just seen how from words which are constantly on our lips we can go back to the primitive Indo-European root from which those words descend. The root that is thus reached is *never* the root of that word alone, but is the kernel, so to speak, round which cluster families of words, all having therein a common starting point. It is the seed from which a trunk grows up with branches, leaves, flowers and fruits.

The method we have applied is the method of one who starts from the mouth of a river and follows it up to its very source. It is the method by which sources and causes are discovered, and science is made. But it is useful sometimes to follow the reverse course, namely, to start from the source, or, in our case, from the root, and follow it downward in all, or at least in its main directions. Let us apply this course to a few roots, chosen at random from

among the linguistic stock of the Indo-European nations, and let us follow them in their route in two at least of the most important families, the Latin and the Teutonic. We will assume as the best representatives of the Latin family (the best or the most apt for our purpose, at least) Latin itself and French; for the Teutonic family, the English language. The field, thus circumscribed, is still wide enough, and I am sure you would not care to have me muster before you an endless array of Old Slavonic, Old High German, Celtic, or Zend words. But you must not be impatient with me if, before entering upon this investigation, I tarry a little, calling your attention to certain facts which, although they may seem somewhat dry, are, nevertheless, of the greatest interest.

In the first place, we must remember that a root is "that combination of sounds which remains when a word is stripped of everything formative." The Indian grammarians called a root *dhātu*, from *dhā*, to nourish. *Dhātu* means any "primary or elementary substance"; hence the primary element of words. It was wise and keen to call roots by a word meaning 'to

nourish.' Roots are indeed the feeding element of languages. To be more exact, we must take here *feeding* in the broad sense which we find in the root *pa* (whence *fa-ther*), meaning both feeding and breeding. The endless variety of our words is but a growth out of a comparatively meagre stock of roots. We can have a good idea of the vital power of roots when we remember that all the Indo-European speeches do not presuppose more than 500 roots. The number of roots for the English language given by Mr. Skeat, at the end of his etymological dictionary, is 461.

The discovery of roots is only one of the glories of the science of language. It has also found out the laws (although at first there seems to be nothing but inextricable confusion) according to which the various Indo-European languages reflect the sounds which constituted the roots in the mother tongue. A most important law is that which, from the name of the great German philologist who discovered it, is known as *Grimm's law*. It is a law on the "rotation of consonants" in the Indo-European languages. A common, although un-

scientific, classification of our consonants, divides them into *hard* (P, T, C, as in *cost*), *soft* (B, D, G, as in *go*), and *aspirates* (H, Ph (f), Th). Grimm noticed that if we put Sanskrit, Greek and Latin on one side, Low German (Gothic, Anglo-Saxon and English) in the middle, and Old High German on the other side, then an *aspirate* in the first group is represented by a *soft* in the middle group, and by a *hard* in the other group; a *soft* in the first group is represented by a *hard* in the middle, and by an *aspirate* in the other; and finally, a *hard* in the first group is represented by an *aspirate* in the middle, and by a *soft* in the last group. According to J. Peile's suggestion we may call an aspirate A, a soft S, a hard H; then Grimm's law may be represented as follows, the word ASH serving as a *memoria technica* for the whole :

Sanskrit, Greek, Latin.	Low German, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, English.	Old High German.
A	S	H
S	H	A
H	A	S

I will not enter into further details, as on this matter I had occasion to dilate elsewhere ("Phil-



osophy of Words," p. 76 f.). But the following table will give an easy and comprehensive exhibition of the bearings of Grimm's law :

	LABIAL.			DENTAL.			GUTTURAL.			
In Greek and generally in Sanskrit and Latin, the letters. . . . .	p	b	ph f	t	d	th	k (c)	g	kh	
Correspond in Gothic (Anglo-Saxon, English) to.....	ph (f)	p		b	th	t	d	kh (h,g)	k	g
And in Old H. German to.....	b (v, f)	ph, f		p	d	th(z)	t	g (h)	kh	k

Now let us hasten to investigate the course of some particular root. Let us take first the root AK, which has a wide filiation indeed. If I should say that the word *eye* comes from this root, you would perhaps laugh at me. But I shall not say it; *facts* say it for me. This root means properly 'to pierce,' 'to be sharp,' and (meanings closely allied) 'to see,' 'to be quick.' From it we have the Latin verb 'ac-*u*-ere,' to sharpen, from which 'ac-*u*-tus,' our acute, sharpened, sharp. *Ague* is only a transformation of 'acute,' from Old French *agu*, sharp, feminine *ague*. It was once called *febris acuta*, sharp, stinging fever. Latin *ac-us*,

needle, and our *ac-id*, *ac-idity*, come from the same root.

*Aç-va* in Sanskrit comes from the same root, and means 'swift,' but it became the name of the horse; Latin, 'æk-vus,' 'equus,' horse; whence our 'equine,' 'equestrian.' The Greek *hippos*, horse, was once *ik-kos*.

*Eager*, sharp, keen, desirous, is from Latin *ac-er*, keen; Middle English *egre*, Old French *eigre*, *aigre*.

Our *ac-me* is the Greek *ak-mé*, a point, the highest point.

From the same root we have Old Latin *oc-us* and the diminutive *oc-ulus*, eye, Old Greek *ok-os*, Russian *oko*, Gothic *augo*, German *auge*, Anglo-Saxon *càge*, Middle English *eighe*, *eiȝe*, *eye*.

This is a good specimen of the life of roots.

Starting from the simple and general meaning of 'sharpness,' it winds itself through many languages, under many forms. It gives us the name of a fever, of a noble animal, of a household utensil, of an intellectual quality, of the organ of sight. In all these meanings it is easy to trace out the primitive general 'meaning' of the root, but only by careful comparative

analysis can one detect the 'form' of the root itself. Still, the results of slow but continuous evolution are neither more wonderful nor more difficult to trace here than in any other field. Who would at first sight believe, for instance, that the marvellous works of our architecture, the churches, the arches, the palaces, are but a slow growth and improvement from the hut of the savage?

Let us take up again the root PA, which we met in father. The primitive meaning of this root is 'to feed,' 'to nourish,' hence, to support, to protect. We have from it the words *pa-ter*, father, the 'feeder,' the 'protector'; hence, 'paternal,' 'patrocinium,' 'patrocinate,' 'patrimony,' 'patria,' the fatherland, 'patriotic,' 'patrician'; 'pa-bulum,' food; 'pa-sc-ere,' to feed, from whose past *pa-s-tum* we have 'pasture,' the French 'repas,' meal, 'pastor,' 'pastoral,' etc.

We have the same root in the adjective *pot-is*, that has power, that protects, and *pot-ens*, powerful. *Hospes*, whose stem is *hos-pit*, is the 'protector of the stranger, of the host'; hence, 'hospital,' 'hospice,' etc.

From this form *pot*, we have the Italian *potere*, Old French *poer*, *pooir*, and, to avoid the hiatus, *pouvoir*, Modern French *pouvoir*, English *power*.

These formations from the root *pa*, belonging to the Latin family, are very different from those that belong to a Teutonic branch. According to Grimm's law, the root *pa* is reflected in Gothic by *fa*. Hence we have the English forms, 'fa-ther,' 'food,' 'feed,' 'fodder.'

The root BHA. This is also an important root, and means to 'shine,' to 'make shine,' and generally to 'make appear,' to bring to manifestation. The Indo-European form *bha* is reflected in Latin and Greek by *fa*. In Greek we have the verb *fa-mi*, to say; *fe-me*, saying, rumor, fame; *pro-fe-tes*, 'fore-teller,' prophet; *fo-ne*, voice ('tele-phone,' 'phonograph,' 'phonetic,' 'euphony,' etc.); *fa-i-no*, to appear, to shine: hence, *fain-ómenon*, that which appears, manifestation, 'phenomenon'; *fan-tasia*, 'that makes visible,' 'that brings forth,' imagination, 'fancy.' Connected with *faino*, we have also 'diaphanous,' pellucid; 'epiphany,' apparition.

From the same root we have also *fa-os* (fōs), *fōtós*, light, whence our 'photograph,' 'photography,' etc.

In Latin we have *fa-ri*, to speak ; *ad-fari* or *affari*, to address somebody ; hence, 'affable,' that speaks to people, kind ; *ef-fari*, to utter ; 'in-effable,' unutterable, indcible ; *prae-fari*, to say before ; hence, 'preface,' that which is said before the beginning of a work ; 'in-fant,' that does not speak. *Fas* is the divine law, that which is divinely spoken ; hence, *ne-farius*, 'nefarious,' against the divine law, horribly wicked. *Fa-ma*, 'fame' ; *fa-tum*, 'fa-te,' that which is spoken, prediction, destiny ; 'fa-tal,' belonging to fate, destined. *Fatua*, a goddess foretelling, foresaying ; to 'infatuate,' to bewitch ; 'infatuated,' that is under a spell, out of his wits, crazed.

We have also the verb *fa-t-eri*, to say, to declare ; hence *con-fit-eri* and *pro-fit-eri*, which, through their past forms *confessus*, *professus*, give our 'to confess,' to say to others, and 'to profess,' to state before others ; 'confession,' 'profession,' etc. 'Profession' must have been said at first only of declared opinions or views,

the standing of a man in regard to some points of religion, morals or politics; hence it was applied to his general standing, his art, his 'profession.' 'Professor' is 'the public declarer'; the teacher.

From the same root is *fa-bula*, 'fa-ble,' a legend, a story. Connected with *fatum* is *fata*, the goddess of destiny; hence Italian *fata*, a supernatural being, an elf, Portuguese *fada*, French *fée* (compare, *aimée* from *amata dictée* from *dictata*, etc.), English *fay*. From *fée* we have in French *féerie*, a work of the 'fée,' an enchantment; hence Middle English *facrie*, *fairye*, and then *fairy*, which, through a popular mistake, received the meaning of elf, instead of enchantment or 'elfery,' so to speak.

The root WID, to see, to know.

You already know the origin of the word 'history.' In Greek from the root *vid*, and the suffix *-tor*, we have the forms *vid-tor*, *hid-tor*, *his-tor*, he who sees, who knows. (These different forms are explained elsewhere: "Philosophy of Words," p. 100-101.) From *histor* we have the verb *historco*, and the substantive *historia*, 'history,'

the narration of him who has seen, who knows.

The Sanskrit *Veda*, knowledge, doctrine, comes from the same root. So does the Latin verb *vid-ere*, to see, from which 'vi-sion' (for *vid-tion*), 'visual,' 'supervision,' 'revision,' 'visible,' 'visit,' 'visitation,' etc., etc.

From the Greek form *id* we have also the word *idea*, properly 'that which is seen,' an image in our mind, a conception; hence, 'ideal,' 'idealize,' etc. *Idol* is closely connected with 'idea'; it means also a 'little image,' a statue.

In the Teutonic family the root *wid* assumes the form *wit*, and from it we have words which at first sight nobody would suspect of any affinity or kinship. First, we have the Anglo-Saxon verb *wit-an*, English to *wit*, to know; and the adjective *wise*, knowing, learned, discreet. The words *witch* and *wiscacre* belong also to this root, but they need some explanation.

We find in Anglo-Saxon the word *wit-e-ga*, a prophet, a seer, formed with suffixes denoting the agent from the verb *wit-an*, to see, to know. From *witega* we come to the common abbre-

viated forms *witga*, *wicca*, feminine *wicce*, Middle English *wicche*, the old form for *witch*, a woman (formerly also a man) supposed to be endowed with superhuman knowledge, with magic power. We meet with the same fact in Icelandic, where from *vita*, to know, we have *vitki*, a wizard, and *vitka*, to bewitch.

*Wiscacre* is a good specimen of what strange transformations words may undergo, especially when a word is transplanted<sup>N</sup> from one language into another and the new<sup>~</sup> people that use it, not knowing its true origin are only too much inclined to see in it some connection with other words familiar to them, and, therefore, so treat it in pronunciation and spelling as to suit their etymological instinct.

*Wiscacre* is in Old Dutch *wiis-segger*, which is a strange travesty of the German *weissager*, a 'sooth-sayer,' as if it meant "wise-sayer." But the German word itself is only a product of ignorant manipulation at the hands of the people, and has nothing to do with the verb *sagen*, to say. The verb *weis-sagen* is in Middle High German *wizagon*, which is derived from the substantive *wiz-a-go*, a prophet. This *wiz-*



*a-go* is formed, with suffixes denoting the agent, from the Old High German verb *wiz-an*, to see, exactly as *wit-e-ga* is from the Anglo-Saxon verb *wit-an*, to see. *Wiseacre*, then, is merely the rather hybrid product of a German mistake and English phonetic corruption. It has nothing to do either with *wise* or with *acre*. It is a name of the agent formed from the verb *wit-an*, to see, and means, or, to be more exact, meant "seer."

## FIFTH LETTER.

Continuation : Growth of Roots—Latin and Anglo-Saxon Words in the English Language—The Root *bhar*—The Root *luk*—The Root *da*—The Root *tar*—The Root *yu*—The Root *ma*—The Root *bhadh*—The Root *spak*.

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I HOPE you are not tired yet, as I want to lay before you some more instances of the development of roots. I am well aware that these researches, interesting as they are in themselves, at length become rather wearisome. In fact, *what* does not become wearisome if too long persisted in? But, pray, be patient. We shall soon have done with this, and shall presently come to other parts of our subject, which are more varied and, I dare say, more directly interesting.

Concerning the striking variety of words which grow out of one root, we must keep present to our minds two particular facts : First, an Aryan root is differently modified in passing

over into one of the different branches of the Aryan languages ; secondly, once the root is moulded, so to speak, according to the particular genius of a language, it follows, also in all its further developments, the tendencies and laws of that language. Thus, if we compare the developments, or the words sprung from one root, in two or three different languages, we must expect to find very wide dissimilarities. For instance, the Aryan root *pa* remains *pa*, as we saw, in Latin, and becomes *fa* in the Teutonic languages ; a difference which becomes greater if we compare the development of this root in these two branches, as we have *pabulum* and *pasture* on one side, *food* and *fodder* on the other.

In English there are very many words transplanted from Latin which, although they are really *doublets* of Teutonic words, yet seem to have with the latter no genealogical connection whatever. In fact, the bulk of the English vocabulary is made up of Anglo-Saxon stock and of words of Latin origin. What is the difference between these two component parts? The Anglo-Saxon words arise from primitive

Indo-European roots and came down to us directly through the Teutonic family ; the Latin words come from Indo-European roots as well, but, before being transplanted into the English field, they were developed, moulded and elaborated by the Latin tongue. Moreover, most of them were not transplanted directly from Latin into English either, but underwent a second elaboration at the hands of the French people, from which finally they came into the English language. We might say that the Anglo-Saxon words in the English language are like plants grown up from Indo-European seed on Teutonic ground, in a Teutonic 'milieu,' fostered and developed by Teutonic men. Its Latin words, on the other hand, are like plants grown up from Indo-European seed also, but on Latin soil and in Latin surroundings, transported afterwards to French and finally to English soil. Of course, the plants that are thus brought back to England from distant and different climes, must have developed into varieties which at first make it difficult to recognize them as sisters of the plants that have grown from the same seed on Teutonic soil.

This is what makes Latin and Anglo-Saxon words, which are derived from the same root, look so different.

Now, let us resume our investigation of the course of some roots.

Root BHAR, to bear, to bring.

As the root *bha* is in Latin and Greek *fa*, *bhar* is in Latin and Greek *far*. Hence the verb *fer-re*, to bear, to bring; from which we have to 'in-fer,' to 'pre-fer,' to 're-fer,' to 'de-fer,' etc.; the adjective 'fer-tile,' that brings forth, fruitful; and the second part of such words as 'odori-ferous,' 'sopori-ferous,' 'morti-ferous,' "voci-ferous" (whence 'voci-ferate'), etc. *For-s* (*for-t-is*) 'that which is brought about,' chance; *for-tune*, 'fortune,' 'case,' destiny; the goddess of chance; 'fortunate,' 'fortuitous,' etc.

This root is, in the Teutonic family, *bar*, from which the Anglo-Saxon *ber-an*, to bear; and 'burden,' 'birth,' 'brother.' 'Brother' answers to Latin 'fra-ter': both are formed from the Indo-European root *bhar*; but one is the result of Latin cultivation, so to say, the other, of Teutonic.

Bier also belongs to the same root, as well as

Latin *fer-e-trum*, a hearse. (As some wag would find some connection between 'bier' and 'beer,' we may observe here that 'beer' has nothing to do with our root. It is probably connected with the root of the word 'barley,' meaning to 'ferment.')

The root LUK, to shine.

We have the Latin verb *luc-ere*, to shine; *luc-s*, light; *luc-men*, *lu-men*, light (hence 'luminous,' 'illuminate,' etc.); *luc-na*, *lu-na*, the moon; *luc-idus*, shining; *luc-strare*, *lu-strare*, to make shine, to 'illustrate,' 'illustrious,' shining, etc. From this root we have also in German *lich-t*, light, Anglo-Saxon, *leoht*, English 'light.'

The root DA, to give.

It is one of the most prolific. Selecting from the numerous words that can be traced to it, we find, for instance, *date*, properly 'given.' The letters of the Pope are still marked 'datum Romæ,' 'given' in Rome, such and such day. We find also the Latin *do-n-um*, gift, and our 'donation.' The Latin *dos* (*dot-is*) is what is given to the bride, 'dower'; *dot-are*, to endow; in Low Latin we find *dotarium*,

Old French *doaire*, afterwards *douaire*, English 'dower.'

The same root is to be found in many compound Latin verbs ending in *-dēre*, as *tra-dere*, which is from *trans*, across, over, and *dare*, properly 'to give over,' and also 'to betray.' From it we have Italian *traditore*, Old French *traïtor*, English 'traitor.' 'Treason,' Middle English *traioun*, Old French *traïson*, is also from the same source.

The root SPAK, to see, to spy.

This is also one of the richest in its growth. We have, for instance, in Sanskrit *spāç-a*, a spy. In Greek it has undergone a curious metathesis; it occurs under the form *skop* (instead of *spok*); hence *skop-ós*, what one looks at, aim, 'scope'; '*epi-skop-os*,' 'over-seer,' popularly disguised under the form 'bishop'; *skep-t-omai*, to see, to look in, to enquire, gives us the word *scep-tic*, which at first meant simply 'observer,' 'inquirer,' hence 'doubter,' and later, 'unbeliever.'

In Latin we have no end of words from this root. *Spec-ies* is the appearance, the type, the 'species.' It is important to note the analogy, on which the Greeks formed the word meaning

'species' (eidos), from the root *vid* meaning also 'to see.'

*Spec-ula*, a place to look from, has given us 'speculate,' 'speculation,' etc., which, from looking out for the weather, stars, and comets, have been transferred to other meanings with which celestial bodies have not much to do.

From the supine *spec-tum*, we have such words as 'in-spect,' to look into; 'pro-spect,' to look out, to look ahead; 'su-spect,' to look under, lest something lie there hidden; 'expect,' 'respect,' 'respectable,' 'spectacle,' etc., etc.

*Au-spices* is in Latin *au(i)-spicium* from *avis*, bird, and *spec*, to see; the looking at the flight or other movements or doings of birds in order to guess at future events.

*Spite* is a shortening from *despite*, as 'sport' from 'desport.' It is in Old French *despit*, and comes from Latin *de-spectus*, a 'looking down,' contempt, scorn. Hence despise, despicable, etc.



## SIXTH LETTER.

Importance of the Study of Roots.—Roots and Dictionaries.—

History of Several Familiar Words : *reception* and *capable* ; *pupil* (student) and *pupil* (of the eye) ; *charming* ; *mercy* and *market* ; *villain* ; *valet* ; *pontiff* ; *miss* and *magistrate* ; *wig* and *perruque*.

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IT is evident that we could thus go on examining roots in all their derivatives until we had exhausted our dictionary. But you need not be afraid. I do not dare to put your patience to such a trial. All I want is to have you notice two facts : First, that all the words we have examined—in fact, all the words in our language—even those that convey the most abstract ideas, come from roots whose meaning is simple and entirely concrete. If you go over the cases we have enquired into, you will not find an exception to this principle. Second, the root-material underlying all linguistic growth is not large. There are but a few hundred roots round which all Indo-European

words cluster, as in so many families. It follows that it is of the greatest importance in all studies of words to go back to the root. Our trouble will be amply compensated, since words, thus examined, tell us the story of their lives, and display before us their pedigrees, with all their connections and relations. And I hope that you will fully agree with me when I say that we should have dictionaries in which words are arranged not alphabetically, but by their roots. Think what a help it would be, if we could take up a dictionary divided into four hundred and odd paragraphs, according to the number of roots from which the substance of the language has developed, and take in at one glance the filiation of each root! In forty or fifty days—ten roots a day—we could go over the whole field of any language. The study of dictionaries would become as systematic as the study of comparative anatomy, or botany, or geology, and in great part a matter of reasoning, rather than of memory. Besides, it would give us an insight into the true meaning of words, such as now scarcely one person in a thousand has. An alphabetical list at the end

would help us to find every word the root of which we do not know or have forgotten.

Now, putting aside this genealogical study of words, let us, for the sake of variety, pursue our researches rather desultorily, as chance or pleasure leads us, among our everyday words, inquiring what connections they have with one another, what garments they were successively clothed with, and what meanings they have assumed in their long peregrinations.

Take, for instance, '*reception*,' '*recipient*,' *receive*, *receipt*, *accept*, *acceptable*, *capable*, *capacity*, *captive*. That *capable* and *capacity* are connected with each other, it is self-evident ; so are *accept* and *acceptable*, *receive* and *receipt*, etc. But it is perhaps not so evident to everybody that all these words are derived from the same root, and there is therefore a general meaning which underlies all their meanings, however different they may be.

*Capable* has preserved the root in its best form ; *-able* is merely a suffix to be found in hundreds of words (*sal-able*, *speak-able*, *port-able*, etc). *Cap* is the root, and we have from it the Latin verb *cap-ere*, to take, to take in, to

contain. Hence *cap-acious*, 'that can contain'; *cap-able*, that can take in, that can understand; therefore 'able,' 'skilful.' In the compounds, the root *cap* is attenuated, so to say, into the form *cip*, just as *fac* is reduced to *fic*, *fat* to *fit*, *tag* to *tig*, etc. Hence the verb *re-cip-ere*, to take again, to *receive*, which was in Old French *recever*; and *recipient*, he who receives. (In Italian, *recipiente* is said only of things, that take, that contain, as barrels, casks, etc.) From the supine (Lat. *re-cep-tum*) we have such forms as *receipt*, *reception*, *except*, *accept*, etc. To *except* is to take out, to *accept* is to take to (one's self), to admit.

*Captive* is the man who is taken, a prisoner. In French *captive* has given also *chétif*, which meant at first, like the Latin *captivus*, a prisoner of war. By a natural transition it came to mean 'miserable,' 'to be pitied,' and now it means 'poor,' 'paltry,' 'puny'; English *caitiff* (*Captain*, from Low-Latin *capitaneus*, is from the stem *capit* of *caput*, the head, the man who is at the head, who leads.) *Prince* (Italian *principe*, Latin *principem*), is from *prim* (*prin* before *c*) for *primus*, first, and the root *cap*, to take; prince, 'he

who takes the first place,' a prominent person, a leader. Hence *principal*, of first importance, and *principle*, a beginning, a leading tenet.

We speak of a studious boy as a good *pupil*, and we speak of the *pupil* of the eye. Is there any connection between these two words? Yes; they are the very same word. We have in Latin the word *pupus*, which means a little boy, a child, (feminine *pupa*, a little girl, a doll, a puppet). From *pupus* the diminutive *pupillus* is derived, from which our *pupil*, a boy, a scholar, and *pupil* of the eye, that is the little image or picture which we see in the center of our eyes.

When you say of one of your friends that she is 'charming,' you hardly think that, had you said this some centuries ago, your friend would have run a great risk of being burnt alive. From a root *kas*, we have in Latin *cas-men*, later *car-men*, which means a sound, a song, a poem. It was said especially of the religious verses recited or murmured by priests in the performance of their rites, and of the formulas used to conjure up the spirits of the dead.

From this we have the French verb *charmer*, to conjure, to enchant. The English *charm* comes from Latin *carmen*, through a French channel, and meant properly to enchant, to cast a spell. *Charming* was then a real synonym of 'bewitching'; but what is to us an expression of personal magnetism, of fascination, to the superstitious and, if I may say it, witch-ful middle-ages was a terrible accusation of communion with evil spirits, to be atoned for by death.

The word magnetism, which I have just used, has also a long story. *Magnet*, the loadstone, was so called from the city of Magnesia, where its peculiar properties were first observed. Hence, 'magnetic,' that has great attractive power, great personal influence.

*Mercy, merciless, market, commerce, merchant, merchandise, mercatorial*, all come from one and the same root. We have the verb *mer-eri*, to receive a share, to gain, to deserve; *mer-i-tum*, is that which is deserved, desert, *merit*. We have also in Latin *merx* (accusative *mercem*), that which is obtained, which is purchased; hence our *mercator* or dealer, *merchant* and *mer-*

Mercy -

Villain.

valet.

*chandise*. We have also *merces* (accusative *mercedem*) that which is obtained (not by money), compensation, reward. From *merces* we have *mercy*, which gradually lost its meaning of a regular, legal compensation, and assumed that of concession or reward given out of a sense of fairness and charity. A lawyer would say that the word, from a strictly juridical meaning, passed over to one of equity, and finally, having left the field of law entirely, took shelter within the pale of charity and sympathy.

*Villain* has been an unfortunate word. It was in Latin *villanus*, the inhabitant of the *villa*, the countryman. Subsequently it assumed the meaning of rustic (which is from *rus*, the country), and its downward course once begun, could not be stopped. Thus it came to mean ill-bred, ill-natured, just as 'rough' came to mean rascal, rogue, black-guard.

The French word *valet* has also lost a great deal. It was once written *vaslet*, a diminutive

form of *vassal*, *vassallet*. It was applied, during the feudal days, to any young warrior, any young vassal, whose duty it was to follow his chief and assist him with his services. The son of a king might have been called a *vaslet*, or *valet*; but now, hardly!

Other words, on the contrary, have taken an upward road, and have gained in their meaning. *Pontiff*, French *Pontife*, Italian *Pontefice*, brings us back to the Latin *pontifex*. It was once taught in schools that *pontifex* meant properly *bridge-maker* (*pons* is bridge), and the Romans, with a philosophic and broad-minded sense of the utility of inter-communications, had entrusted them to the highest religious authority, so as to give this extremely important department a kind of religious prestige. This, however, is more ingenious than true. *Pons* at first meant simply a 'path,' and it is more probable that *pontifex*, "the path-maker," meant the leader in processions and other religious ceremonies.

*Sire*, as we saw elsewhere, comes from Latin *senior*, which means simply *elder*, *elderly*. From



the same word we have *signorina* and *senorita*, the Italian and Spanish words for *miss*, which mean, however, according to their etymology, 'little old woman.'

Who would believe that there is any connection between *miss* and *magistrate*? Still a mere glance at their history will dispel all doubts of their common origin. Latin *magistratus* is from *magister*, which, being a doubly comparative form, means properly 'more greater' and conveys ideas of authority and superiority. From *magister*, through the frequent loss of the consonant between two vowels, we have the Old French *maistre*, and our *master*, from which *mastress*, *mistress*. Now *miss*, as I have shown in the "Philosophy of Words," is merely a slight transformation of the word *misses*, our pronunciation of *mistress*.

It is not easy, at first, to see any connection between the word *season*, as winter, fall, etc., and the seasoning of a salad. There is the same connection as in French between the substantive *saison*, the season, and the verb *assaisonner*, to season.

The French *saison*, from which the English

*season*, is from Latin *sationem*, the sowing time, the spring. But how from this meaning we went to that of seasoning a dish, is well explained by Littré in his "Pathologie verbale." The proper meaning of *assaisonner*, to season, is to cultivate in the proper season, to ripen in time. "Viande assaisonnée" means cooked "à point, ni trop, ni trop peu, comme qui dirait mûrie à temps. Du moment que assaisonner fut entré dans la cuisine, il n'en sortit plus, et de cuire à point il passa à l'acception de mettre à point pour le goût à l'aide de certains ingrédients."

Did you ever suspect that our *wig* had anything to do with the French *perruque*? The French word passed into English, where we find *perwigge*, and later *periwig*. Out of a false notion that this *peri* was the Greek preposition, which we have in many other words, like 'perimeter,' 'Peripatetic,' etc., it was dropped in the course of time and we came to this poor wreck, *wig*. As to the French *perruque*, it is to be referred to the Italian *pelucca*, from *pelo*, hair.

*escape -* *no matter.*

## SEVENTH LETTER.

Continuation : to *escape*, to *dismantle*, *artillery*, *coquetry*, *dupe*, to *arrive*, *press* and *express* ; *gossip* and *commérage* ; *hypocrite* ; *throne*, *angel*, *government*, *alms*.—Changes in personal and local names : *Ingleford*, *Cape Hvarf*, *Château Vert*, *Beauchef*, *Grand-Pont*, etc.—Names of Ships.—Signs of Inns.

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THE original meaning of the word ‘*escape*,’ French *échapper*, had a humoristic tinge, of which we are no longer conscious. In Low-Latin they had a word *capa* to designate a kind of coat that covered all the body ; from this is the Italian *cappa*, a kind of mantle. To escape (*ex-capare*), meant properly to get out of one’s coat, as when one holds you by your sleeves, and you slip out, leaving your coat in his hands. It was really a slang term ; to ‘*ske-daddle*,’ we should say now. The verb is preserved, but its original piquancy has been lost.

Another verb we have taken, like *escape*, from the name of a coat. To *dismantle*, French *démanteler*, is properly to take away a mantle,

an overcoat. But now we mean thereby to pull down, to destroy the ramparts of a city. The French *démanteler* was first introduced in the sixteenth century, and Littré is right when he says that it is really ingenious to have compared the bulwarks of a city to the mantle that protects man against cold and bad weather.

Once the word *artillery* had nothing to do with gunpowder or firearms. It is a collective substantive derived from 'art,' and it meant all the implements and engines of war, used for attack and defence. The invention of gunpowder put out of use all bows, catapults, and other instruments which were the artillery of old. The word, however, remained, and was applied to guns, cannons, and all the new machines of war introduced after that great invention.

*Attach* and *attack* are etymologically identical. This is one of the many cases in which one word gives birth to two. By and by the natural selection of custom diversifies them in their meaning.

*Coquette* is derived from the French *coq*, the English *cock*. One cannot help admiring the

ingenious and, to use Littré's word, 'riante,' imagination that has transferred the air and the appearance of our gallant chanticler to the human kind, and has found there a happy expression, "pour l'envie de plaire, pour le désir d'attirer en plaisant." It is rather strange that in Italian the same idea should be expressed by the word *civetta*, which means 'owl.'

Another word derived from the name of a bird is the French *dupe*. *Dupe* is an old name for the whoop, French *huppe*. This bird has the reputation of being very silly and very easy to catch. It has not been difficult, then, for the popular mind to apply the name of the bird to people who are easily deceived. In the same way we use goose, duck, gander, etc.

The verb *arrive*, French *arriver*, brings us back to a Low-Latin *adripare*, where the word *ripa*, bank, is clearly visible. *Arriver* meant in Old French only to go or to push to the bank, to the shore. Littré quotes: "Li vens les arriva," the wind pushed them ashore. By and by, the idea of bank or shore was lost sight of, and to 'arrive' came to mean to reach any place whatever. In French they went a step

further, and so they say of a fact that it reached a place, 'took place;' 'il arriva que . . . , ' it happened that . . .

The word '*compliment*' is not derived from 'a completionem mentis' nor 'a complete mentiri,' "fully lying," as Fuller contends, "because compliments are usually completely mendacious." It is simply a substantive made from the Old French verb *complir*, Latin *complere*, to fulfill, and meant at first "accomplishment." The acts and words of civility towards one's friends and neighbors were regarded as 'accomplishments,' as the fulfillment of a duty.

It is hardly possible to find two words which can teach us more about the evolution that words go through than "press" and "express." They are derived from the same word, they are similar in sound, and still their meaning is so wide apart. From *pressum*, the supine of the Latin verb *premere*, to press, to weigh down, we have the verb to *press*, and the compounds to 'impress,' to 'repress,' to 'oppress,' etc. The verb to 'express' and the substantive 'expression,' which means literally 'pressing out,' aptly indicate the mental labor necessary to find

in words a fitting garment for our thoughts. The past participle 'express,' which means nothing but 'said,' came to have a peculiar strength, as when we say: 'He told us in express terms,' namely, 'He really uttered these words, there is no doubt about it.' Hence such expressions as 'by his express command,' that is to say, 'by his special, particular command.' When we speak of an 'express train,' we use the word in the same sense, 'a special train.' In the same time the word *press*, which at first was said of a simple, rude contrivance to press down a piece of paper against some set types, took the meaning of all that came out of such pressure, so that the name of a poor, almost primitive tool came to mean one of the greatest powers in the world.

Imagine two diverging lines: they start from the same point, and at first they are so close to each other that naked eyes fail to perceive any interval between them. But let them go on, each in its direction, and they will run so wide apart that no imaginable space can enclose them. The same thing happens with the meanings of our words.

*Gossip* is another word the meaning of which has travelled very far, so to speak, from its birth-place. Chaucer spells it *gossib*, a transformation from *god-sib*. *Sib* means 'akin.' God-father and godmother are 'god-sib,' akin in God. It seems almost fatal for people who are akin to be fond of a good chat together, and of dissecting liberally common relations. The French *commérage* (from *commère*, god-mother) and the Italian *comare*, god-mother, went through the same evolution of meaning, and are now synonyms of gossip, idle at least, if not uncharitable.

*Hypocrite* was not such a bad word at first as it is now. It is a Greek word and meant simply an actor, one who clothes himself with other people's personality for an artistic purpose. It is easy to see how from this we came to the present meaning of the word.

*Throne*, on the contrary, had nothing lofty about it. It meant simply a stool. Use, by that selection which sometimes is not more accountable in language than in other fields, picked it out of many other words meaning a stool or chair, and reserved it for the chair where a king sits.



Nor had *angel* anything divine in its meaning. It meant simply a messenger. It was afterwards confined to the messengers of God.

Nor had *government*, as I already had occasion to remark elsewhere, anything to do with the great art of the shepherds of peoples, to use Homer's phrase. We have in Greek the verb κυβερνᾶν, which means 'to steer.' 'Gubernator,' in Latin, was the pilot of a boat. By metaphor *gubernator*, *gouverneur*, *governor* became the title of the man who steers the Ship of the State.

There are some changes in words which are as many indexes of other important changes, social, political or religious. Take, for instance, the word 'alms.' This was once a noble word. Through the forms *aelmaesse* (Anglo-Saxon), *almesse* (Middle English), *almes*, *alms* comes from the Greek *eleemosyne*, from the verb *eleô*, to have pity, to have sympathy for the suffering of our fellow-men. It had then a meaning essentially moral; it meant the sharing with one's soul of other people's grief. By and by it was narrowed down to the present meaning. Do you not think that this change is very sig-

nificant? It does not speak well for the rich indeed if, as the story of this word tells us, a few crumbs of bread or a little money have taken the place of that genuine heartfelt sympathy which is the first of our duties. And the poor must have been very poor and wretched to accept, without grudge or complaint, the present meaning of the word *alms*, forgetful entirely of its noble meaning of old. It is noteworthy that in Italy, with the lower people at least, the word *carità* (charity) has suffered from the same degradation of meaning; from the expression of that highest bond of love and sympathy which should bind all mankind, it sank to designate the crumbs of bread thrown indifferently or scornfully to a beggar. But of these changes which imply moral or social changes, we shall see more presently.

Before passing over to other considerations, let us cast a glance at some queer changes which have taken place in proper names either of places or of persons. Such names are as a rule far more steady in their forms than other common words. But sometimes, especially when they pass from one to another language and

when popular fancies about their etymology come into play, they show very striking transformations. (See Taylor, "Words and Places.")

*Ingleford*, for instance, or the ford of the Angles, has given *Hungerford*. "*Cape Wrath* was originally *Cape Hvarf*, a Norse name, indicating a point where the land trends in a new direction." In Oxfordshire *Château vert* has become *Shotover Hill*; *Beau chef*, *Beachy Head*; *Grand Pont*, 'the great Bridge,' *Gram-pound*. Leighton *Beau desert* has become \*Leighton *Buzzard*.

*Grammercy Square*, in New York, you would at first suppose is of French origin. But in the old Dutch maps of the city its name is *De Kromme Zee*, the crooked lake, and its site was occupied by a pond.

*Anse des Cousins*, the "bay of mosquitoes," became *Nancy Cousins* bay. *Hagenes*, one of the Scilly Isles, became *St. Agnes*, and *Soracte*, the mountain dear to Horace, is now called *St. Oreste*.

A tower, near Grenoble, that was called from *St. Verena*, is now called *la tour SANS VENIN*, the tower without poison, and the peasants are

firmly convinced that no poisonous animal can live in the neighborhood of that tower.

Sailors have changed H. M. S. Bellerophon into 'the Billy Ruffian'; the 'Andromache' into the 'Andrew Mackay'; the 'Æolus' into the 'Alehouse'; the 'Courageux' into the 'Currant juice,' and the steamer 'Hirondelle' (the swallow), into the 'Iron-devil.'

To this category belong the rather fantastic transformations of signs of inns; for instance, of 'the Bacchanals' into 'the Bag o' Nails'; the 'Pige washael,' or the virgin's greeting, into the 'Pig and Whistle.' If you will allow me, I will conclude this list with the prodigious linguistic feat of that groom "who used to call Othello and Desdemona—two horses under his charge—by the names of Old fellow and Thursday morning."

## EIGHTH LETTER.

Some more Researches in the History and Connection, of Familiar Words.—*Tear* and *larme* ; *dies*, *jour* and *Tuesday* ; *chair*, *cathedral* and *session* ; *tile* and *detective* ; *coin* in English and in French ; *aurora* and *combustion* ; *altar* and *origin* ; *initial* and *count* ; *surgeon* and *gardener* ; *arrows* and *intoxication* ; *temple* and *anatomy* ; *tide* and *demon* ; *timber* and *domestic* ; *symposium* and *poison* ; a ‘*buxom*’ woman ; *syllable* and *syllabus* ; *deluge* and *laundry* ; *prose* and *verse* ; *hectic* and *sail* ; *village*, *parish* and *diocese* ; *chaperon* ; *complexion* ; *beauty* and *bounty* ; *reasons* and *rations*.

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I SAID I would put an end to this rather desultory review of words most notable for their changes in sound and meaning, in order to pass over to other, in my mind, more interesting parts of our subject. But you write me that you feel *so much* interested in these researches, and you like these curiosities *so much*, that I will take you at your word, and devote one letter more to this same branch, bringing you another batch of familiar words whose use has undergone striking transformations.

I. Taylor, in his excellent book on "Words and Places," asks (page 256): "Who would imagine that the French word *larme* is the same as the English *tear*: that the French *jour* is a lineal descendant of *dies*; or that *jour* and the two syllables of *Tuesday* are all descended from the same original Aryan root?"

Is this true? Let us see. From a typical Aryan form *dak-ra*, a tear, we have the Greek forms *dakru*, *dakruon*, *dakruma*, and Old Latin *dacrima*, which afterwards, with a change not unusual, passed into *lacrima*. From this we have the Italian *lagrima* or *lacrima*, and the French *larme* (as *sacra-mentum* has given *serment*). According to Grimm's law, to the Aryan type *dakra* answers a Teutonic type *tagra*. Hence Gothic *tagr*, Danish *taar*, Anglo-Saxon *teár*, *taer*, English *tear* (Middle English *tere*).

From Latin *dies* we have the adjective 'diurnus,' of day time; from which the Italian *giorno*, *journ* in the Northern Italian dialects, *jour* in French.

The last part of Mr. Taylor's sentence is not correct. Latin *dies* descends from a root *diu*,

to shine ; this root gives in Anglo-Saxon *tiw*, from which we have the name of the God *Tiw* : *Tewesday*, *Tiwes-day*, *Tues-day*. It is true then that *jour*, which is derived from *dies*, and the 'first' syllable of *Tuesday* descend from the same original Aryan root ; but the 'second' syllable of *Tuesday*, that is the substantive *day*, Middle English *dai*, *dei*, Anglo-Saxon *daeg*, Dutch *dag*, Gothic *dags*, German *tag*, is of an origin entirely uncertain, and has no connection with the root of Latin *dies*. Were these two words, *day* and *dies*, derived from the same Aryan root, the English word should begin by *t*, according to Grimm's law (compare *duo*, *two*; *dacruma*, *tear*). Besides, it would still be impossible to explain the *g* of the Anglo-Saxon form *daeg*.

So easy it is, even for scholars like Taylor, to be deceived by a resemblance of sounds !

Would you say that there is any connection between *chair* and *cathedral* ? Still they are derived from the same root and word ; only one is a substantive, whilst the other has an adjectival form. There is more : the word *session*, which seems to be miles apart, belongs also to

the same root, and when we say 'a sitting chair,' we say twice the same thing, unconsciously, as 'chair' means by itself something to sit upon.

We have the Aryan root *sad*, to which answers the Teutonic *sit*. This root appears in Latin and Greek under the form *sed*. But in Greek, according to the tendency of that language to substitute an initial *s* with an aspirate (compare *hus*, Latin *sus*; *hals*, Latin *sal*, etc.), the root *sed* became *hed*. From this root we have *hed-ra* (*ἔδρα*), 'something to sit on,' a chair, a seat. With the prefix *katá*, we have *cathedra*, a seat, a stool, a pulpit. Hence *cathedral church*, a church with a seat, a throne for the bishop.

This word 'cathedral,' belonging to the ecclesiastical world and being introduced into our language by learned men, has preserved its entire form. But the word 'cathedra' itself, having become a popular word, underwent all those surprising, but at the same time regular transformations by means of which the people, unconsciously yet symmetrically and analogically, mould foreign words according to the



types of their own language. *Cathedra* passing into the French language: First, had to change the sound *ca* into *cha* (English *sha*); compare *chapeau* from *capellum*, *château* from *castellum*, etc. Second, *th*, reduced first to *t*, had to disappear. As we have often noticed, it is a law of the French language that a consonant between two vowels, in certain particular combinations, disappears; compare *jeu* from *iocus*, *feu* from *focus*, *maître*, *maître*, from *magister*, etc. Third, *d* (or *t*) before *r* had to disappear; compare *père*, *mère*, *frère*, from *patrem*, *matrem*, *fratrem*. Fourth, the final *a* had, as usual, to be reduced to *e*: *table* from *tabula*, *lune* from *luna*, etc.

Through these changes which are *constant* in the French language, we have successively the forms: *chaïcre*, *chaere*, *chaire*, from which the English *chair*.

The Latin verb *sed-ere*, to sit, makes in the supine *sessum*, from which the substantive *sessio* (-onis) is formed, and our *session*, namely a 'sitting' of an assembly or other body.

Is it not clear? 'Session,' 'cathedral,' and 'chair' are all from one and the same Aryan

root (*sad*), however strange it may seem at first.

Is there any connection between *tile* and *detective*? You laugh. I know what you mean: you will say that one covers, while the other uncovers. Good! *ben trovata*! But I mean, is there any philological connection? is there any genealogical relation between the two words? They are cousins, so to say. One, *tile*, grew up in a Teutonic country; the other was brought up on Latin soil and then travelled to England, but both of them come from the same Aryan parental root. *Detective*, of course, is from the Latin preposition *de*, and the supine *tectum* of the verb *teg-ere*, to cover; from which we have also 'tegument,' a covering. *Teg-ere* stands for *steg-ere*, as it can be inferred from the corresponding forms *steg-ein* in Greek, and *sthaḡ* in Sanskrit. *Tile* (which occurs also in the form *tigel*) is in Anglo-Saxon *tigle* and corresponds to Latin *tegula*, also from the root *teg*: properly a covering. We find in Anglo-Saxon *tigel-wyrhta*, a tile-wright, a potter.

There can be no doubt that *coin* is the same word as the French *coin*. But the latter means 'corner,' while the English word is applied to

old money. How is this? *Coin* is the transformation of Latin *cuncus*, a wedge, and *coins* were called a certain kind of moneys, that were stamped with a wedge. The word, transported into English, dropped out of the living and familiar language; it became, so to say, a fossil word, used merely as a definite scientific term, in accordance with its old meaning. In French, where it had become a familiar word, it underwent some of those modifications of meaning which are common with all living words. It came to be applied not only to wedges and moneys stamped with a wedge, but to any angular form, to the angle of two walls, to a corner.

I am sure you would be surprised and amused, had we to go over our dictionary together, and pick up at random some of the most common words, which, although differing from each other greatly, are to be referred to the same root. Take, for instance, *aurora* and *combustion*. Would you believe that these words come from the same root? Still nothing is more certain. From an Aryan root *us*, to burn, normally amplified into the form *aus*, we have the Latin

*ausosa*, the archaic form of *aurora*. (As you know, Latin *s*, between two vowels, passes very frequently into *r*: remember *honoris* from *honos*, *honosis*, etc.) *Aurora* means really 'burning,' 'shining.'

From the same root *us*, and with the same change of *s* into *r*, we have the Latin verb *ur-ere*, to burn, which, however, shows its true root in its supine *us-tum*. This verb, with the prefix *comb*, equivalent to *cum*, gives the verb *comburare*, from whose supine *combustum* we have the substantive *combustio*, *-onis*, a burning up, a 'combustion.'

It is also a fact that *altar* and *origin* come from the same root. *Altar*, Latin *altare*, akin with *altus*, high, is from the root *ar* (-al), to raise. From this same root we have the Greek verb 'or-nymi,' to raise, to stir up, and Latin *or-iri*, to rise, to begin. From this the substantive *origo* *-inis* is derived, a 'rising,' a 'beginning,' an 'origin.'

The root *i* of the verb *ire*, to go, gives birth to so different words as 'initial' and 'count.' From *in-ire*, to go into, to enter, to begin, we have *in-itium*, a beginning, and the adjective

*initial.* From *cum-ire*, to go together, we have *com-item*, 'that goes together,' a 'companion,' whence French *comte*, and English *count*. The count was the companion, the follower of the prince or duke.

Practically, a *surgeon* and a *gardener* have not much in common. But philologically they are consanguineous. 'Surgeon' is a corruption from *chirurgicon*. We find the forms *cirurgian*, Old French *cirurgien*, Modern French *chirurgien*. It comes from the Greek *cheirourgos*, from *cheiro*—(*cheir*, the hand), and *ergein*, to work; the physician that works with his hands, that performs, as we put it nowadays, "practical operations." This word *cheir*, the hand, is from an Aryan root *ghar*, to seize, to hold, to grasp, to enclose. From this same root we have the German 'garten,' and the English 'garden,' whose primitive meaning was simply an 'enclosure,' an 'enclosed patch of ground.' 'Gardener,' of course, is a direct filiation from 'garden.'

We associate the idea of intoxication with that of wine or liquor. But, strange to say, the word is derived from the Greek name of

the bow. The bow in Greek is called *toxón*; *toxa* were the arrows; *tokikón*, (Latin *toxicum*) was called a poison with which the arrows were smeared. In other languages this word *toxicon* was applied to all kinds of poison; 'toxicology' is the branch of medicine that studies poisons. In English we have applied its derivations ('intoxication' and 'intoxicate') to that particular kind of poisoning which is due to the abuse of wine or other alcoholic beverage.

*Temple* and *anatomy* have also a common origin. Latin *templum*, from an original *tem-ulum*, is, like the Greek *tem-enos*, from the root *tam*, to cut. It was at first a piece of ground cut off for religious purposes, a sacred enclosure. From this same root we have the Greek verb *tem-no*, to cut; *tom-e*, a section, a part of a work; and, with the prefix *aná*, *anatomy*, a cutting up, a dis-secting.

The same communion of birth may be traced out in *tide* and *demon*. *Daemon* in Latin, *daimón* in Greek, did not mean an evil spirit, but a god. The word is formed from the root *da*, to divide, to distribute; *daemon* was the distributing, the ruling power. It was only in

progress of time (very likely under the influence of Christian ideas) that the name of heathen gods was applied to malignant spirits, to infernal deities.

From the same root *da*, which in the Teutonic family assumes the form *ta*, we have, among others, the word *tide*, which at first meant a division, a portion of time, then especially that portion of time that intervenes between the flux and the reflux of the sea; finally it was applied to the flux and reflux itself. It corresponds exactly to the German *Zeit* (compare *two* and *zwei*; *ten* and *zehn*; etc.)

Again, the same connection can be shown to exist between *domestic* and *timber*. *Domestic*, as you know, is from Latin *domus*, a house, and this from the root *dam*, to build. This root is in the Teutonic family *tam* which, with the suffix *ra*, gives us a word like *tam-ra* or *tem-ra*, meaning 'material for building.' From this we have the Danish *tømmer*, the Swedish *timmer*, and, with the excrescence of a *b* (quite common between *m* and *r*), the English *timber*. In the same way is formed the German *Zimmer* (compare *two* and *zwei*; *tide* and *Zeit*,

etc.) The fact that a word meaning 'building material' has been restricted to signify wood, throws no little light upon the life of the ancient Teutons, the nature of their dwellings and surroundings.

Not many would be able to discover any connection between *symposium* and *poison*. But these two words come also from the same root. There is an Aryan root *pa* which means to drink. It occurs in Latin and Greek under the form *po*. From it we have the Greek *po-tos*, a drink, and the Latin verb *po-tare*, to drink, with the substantive *po-tion*, and the adjective *po-table*, drinkable.

We have also the Greek substantive *po-sis*, drink. With the prefix *sun* (*syn*), together, we have *symposium*, 'a drinking together,' a drinking party, a feast. *Poison* is merely a doublet of *potion*, and meant at first any beverage, of whatever kind. *Poison* is the French for Latin *potio* (accusative *potionem*), just as *sationem* has given *saison*.

Sometimes I am afraid you wonder why I quote Aryan roots with the vowel *a* (as *tam*, *sad*, *pa*) and then I give their representa-



tives in Latin and Greek with other vowels, *e*, *o* (tom, sed, po). In fact, it is so. As to this point, I beg you to trust me without demonstration. Here too, in these changes of vowels, there are general principles and analogies, but it would take me entirely too far if I should attempt to explain them at length. Therefore I beg you to be satisfied that, on this as well as on any other point, I never assert anything without being able to produce substantial proofs of my assertion.

When you hear or read of 'a buxom lady,' did you ever ask yourself where this *buxom* comes from, and whether it has always had the same meaning? We have in Anglo-Saxon the verb *bug-an*, to bend, to bow. And as from *win* we have *win-some*, we have, from the stem of *bagan*, *bug-some*, or *buxom*, whose original meaning therefore was 'bowing,' 'obedient,' 'graceful,' and also 'good-humored.' From this the present meaning was gradually and naturally developed.

This root *bug* is in the Aryan mother-tongue *blugh*, which must become in Latin *fug* (com-

pare *fid* from *bhid*, *fer* from *bhar*, etc.), from which we have the verb *fug-ere*, to bend, to give way, to turn to flight. Hence *fugitive* and *buxom* come from the same Aryan root.

Where does *syllable* come from? It is in Old French *sillabe*, and came to us from Latin *sillaba*, but it is really a Greek word *syl-labé*, from the prefix *syn*, together, and the root *lab*, to seize, to hold together. 'Syllable' is properly that part of a word which 'holds together.' From the same root we have such words as 'catalepsis,' 'epilepsis, a sudden seizure, a sudden attack. 'Syllabus' is a 'holding together,' a 'compendium' of principles.

*Deluge* and *laundry* come from the same root. 'Laundry' is spelt in P. Plowman *lauendrye*, and 'launder' is spelt *lauender*. It is evident that they come from the same root as the verb to *lav-e*, to wash. The root *lau* (just as *aus* from *us*) is an amplification of *lu*, which we have in the Latin *lu-ere*, to lave, *di-lu-ere*, to dilute, *di-luvium*, deluge, etc.

I am sure that you will raise your eyebrows

a little if I declare that *prose* and *verse* come from the same root. But please listen a moment. The Romans used to call 'prose' 'prorsa oratio,' that is to say a 'direct speech,' straightforward, not artificially arranged. *Prorsa* is the feminine of *prorsus*, a contracted form of *prouersus*, 'turned forward,' 'straightforward,' from *pro*, forward, and *uersus*, the past participle of the verb *uertere*, to turn. Now *verse* is simply this same past participle of *uertere*, and means a 'turning,' a 'line.'

In English the words derived from this verb *uert-ere* are countless: ad-vert, con-vert, in-vert, di-vert, sub-vert, re-vert, per-vert, a-vert, with all their connections and derivations.

Perhaps it will also be a little surprising to hear that *hectic* and *sail* descend from a common stock. We have an Aryan root *sagh*, to hold, to hold in, which has in Greek the form *sech*. From this we should have a form like *sec-tic*; but in Greek, as we know, the initial *s* is often replaced by an aspirate (compare Latin *sed*, Greek *hed*). Therefore we have the form *hec-tic*, meaning exactly 'holding on,' 'contin-

ual,' and was said of a fever. The transition to the modern meaning is easily perceived.

From this root *sagh* we have a Teutonic type *seg-la*, 'holding on,' 'bearing up' against the wind, whence German *seg-el*, Icelandish *segl*, Anglo-Saxon *seg-el*, *segl*, Middle English *seyl*, *seil*, English *sail*.

To put an end to this long, entirely too long letter, let me explain how so different words as *economy*, *parish*, *village* and *diocese* come from the same parental root. From a root *uic*, to enter, we have in Sanskrit *veça*, a house, and in Greek *voik-os*, afterwards *oikos*, a house. From the stem of *oikos* and from that of the verb *noméo*, to manage, to govern, we have *eco-nomy*, properly 'the management of the house' (compare German *hauswirtschaft*).

From this same stem *oiko*, and the prefix *dia*, through, throughout, we have the verb *dioikéo*, 'to keep house,' to conduct, to govern, and from this the substantive *dioikesis*, Latin *diæcesis*, English *diocese*, an administration, a province (the bishop's province).

From the same stem and the prefix *pará*, near, beside, we have *paroikia*, a 'neighbor-

hood,' Latin *paroccia*, French *paroisse*, Middle English *parische*, English *parish*.

From the same Aryan root *uic*, from which we have the Greek *oikos*, we have the Latin *uic-us*, which was said of a street among houses, and of the houses themselves; a hamlet, a village. From this *uic-us* we have the diminutive *uic-ula*, a country seat; from this, *uic-la*, and then *villa* (compare *sella* from *sed-ula*, *sed-la*; *stella* from *ster-ula*, etc.). From *villa* we have *village*, *villain*, etc. We must also remember that our *wick*, a town, and the Anglo-Saxon *wic*, a village, a town, are mere transformations of the Latin *uic-us*.

P. S.—In your last note you ask me where *chaperon*, *complexion* and *beauty* come from. I am glad to be able to answer your query; but first let me remark that you have betrayed your sex very naïvely. Anybody, even without looking at the signature, would say that such etymologies are asked by a woman!

*Chaperon*, as you know, is a French word, and is connected with *chape*, Low-Latin *capa*, a cape, from which we have seen the verb 'to escape'

is derived. *Chapron* is properly a hood, a cap. By a rather bold metaphor, we apply this name to the lady that protects, that escorts a young lady.

*Complexion* is from *cum*, together, and the verb *plectere*, to weave, to twine, to plait. *Complexion* meant really the texture, the structure of the body, its constitution. In this sense it is used in French and Italian. But as a healthy or unhealthy constitution is reflected in the skin and outward appearance, the word assumed by and by the meaning which is now current in English.

The etymology of *beauty* is quite interesting. We hear often philosophers discuss about the ideal connection of the beautiful with the good. Whatever the opinion of philosophers may be, we have in language some striking facts that should be taken into account. We know that the Greeks used often *kalós* (beautiful) where we would use 'good.' The Italians use these words in a quite remarkable way. They would speak, for instance, of 'un bel stipendio,' a *beautiful* salary; 'un bel guadagno,' a *beautiful* (considerable) profit; 'una bella posizione,' a *beauti-*

*ful* (good) situation, while they say, especially in Southern Italy, that a girl is *buona*, 'good,' meaning that she is handsome. This same intimate connection between good and beautiful appears from the etymology of 'beauty.' In Low-Latin, besides *bonus*, good, we find the adjective *benus*, good, goody, from the adverb *bene*. This *benus*, has a diminutive *benulus*, goody, pretty. And as from *sterula* we have *stella*, from *sedula sella*, from *cunula culla*, *benulus* has given *bellus*, pretty, whence the Italian *bello*, beautiful. From *bellus* we have the abstract *bellitas* (accusative *bellitatem*) from which the Old French *beltet*, *bealteit* and (as *alba* gives aube, *alt(c)rum* gives *autre*, etc.) *beaute*. Hence Middle English *beaute*, English *beauty*.

So that *beauty* can strictly be said to be a doublet of *bounty*, as this is from *bonitas*, goodness, the abstract from *bonus*, good.

A propos of doublets, I want to call your attention to two others that well illustrate how words change in shape and meaning, still being connected by the thread of a fundamental idea. The Latin verb *re-or* means to think, to judge,

to reckon, and from its past *ratus* we have the substantive *ratio* that was applied to the faculty of judging, of reckoning, as well as to the judging and reckoning itself. As from Latin *sationem* we have French *saison* and English *season*, from *rationem* we have French *raison* and English *reason*.

But this same word *ratio* (-*onem*), came also to be used in a certain technical way, and to denote the measuring out his share of victuals to each soldier, the reckoning to what each soldier is entitled according to the abundance or dearth of supplies, as well as the share itself. In this sense the word remained, so to say, petrified in the military language, and was saved from the usual modifications of words belonging to general use. It preserved the form *razione* in Italian, *ration* in French, from which it has been directly imported into English.

Mathematicians use still another form of this word. While both *reason* and *ration* are derived from the accusative of the Latin word, they have taken simply the nominative *ratio* and use it to mean a calculation, the relation of one thing to another.



## NINTH LETTER.

Common Words Derived from Local or Personal Names—  
Names of Trees, Animals, Minerals, Fabrics and Money  
—Influence of the Arabs, the Flemings, and the Italians—  
Lumber, cravat, spencer, sandwich, dollar, tariff, etc.

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YOU know already that all local names were once common names; Oxford, for instance, was the ford of the oxen; 'Thames' meant 'broad water,' etc. But the reverse is equally true, that many of our common words are derived from local or personal names. This is especially true of many of our fruit-trees, of our minerals, of our fabrics, and moneys.

The word *peach*, for instance, is in Old French *pesche*, in Italian *pesco* or *persico*, in Spanish *persigo*, in Latin *persicum*, and reminds us of the Persian origin of the tree. The 'chestnut,' French *châtaigne* or *chastaigne*, Italian *castagno*, comes from *Castanwa*, a city in Thessaly. 'Currants' were once called 'corinths,' from the city of Corinth. 'Jalap' comes from Jalapa, a province of Mexico;

'coffee' from the mountain Caffa, south of Abyssinia; 'Mocha,' 'Portorico,' and many names of spices, are plainly local names. 'Tobacco' is the name of an island where the famous weed grows well. The Falernian, the Chianti, the Madeira, Cape, Champagne, Burgundy, Chablis, Sauterne, Medoc, Asti, Tokay, Malaga, Marsala, Xeres (Sherry), and several other wines are called after local names.

Of our animals, the 'guinea-pig' and the 'canary-bird' owe their names, as it is evident, to Guinea and the Canary Islands. The 'pheasant,' Latin *avis phasiana*, was imported from the banks of the Phasis, a river in Colchis. The greyhound is the 'Grecian dog,' 'canis graius.' A 'barb' was a horse imported from Barbary. Angolas, Cashmeres, Newfoundlands, etc., need no explanation.

'Copper,' Latin *cuprum*, owes its name to the Cyprus Island. 'Loadstone' is a corruption of a translation from *Lydius lapis*, the stone from Lydia. From Crete the Romans derived their *creta*, a kind of pipe-clay used for seals. *Creta* is still used in Italian and has given in French *craie*, from which our 'clay.'

Many chemical substances have been named after local names. 'Ammonia,' for instance, and 'sal ammoniacum,' remind us of the Lybian desert where the priests of Jupiter Ammon used to prepare it in large quantities.

As to the names of our fabrics, we must distinguish three periods in the history of the middle ages: first the Arabs were the most excellent and celebrated workers; then this glory seemed to pass into the hands of the Flemings, and later of the wealthy Italian republics. As a consequence, we have three classes of names of our fabrics: one of Arabic, the second of Dutch, and the third of Italian origin.

*Muslin*, French *mousseline*, owes its name to *Moussul*, a city in the neighborhood of the eastern capital of the Caliphs. *Gauze*, French *gaze*, Spanish *gaza*, was made at Gaza. *Fustian*, Italian *fustagno*, is from Fostat, a suburb of Cairo. The damask silk and the 'Damascus' swords and the 'Toledo' blades clearly indicate their local origin.

With the decay of Arabian industry and power, the manufactures of the Flemings came

into prominence. *Cambric*, French *cambrai*, was so called from Cambrai. *Diapre*, formerly written *d'ipre*, or *d'ypres*, was made at Ypres. So we have *Lisle* thread, *Arras* tapestry, *Brussels* carpets; and from the Walloons we have *galloon*, that is Walloon lace.

From Italian industry we have fiddles of 'Cremona,' Paduasoy or Padua silk, the scent called Bergamot, from the city of Bergamo. Milliners and mantua-makers are so called from *Milan* (Milaners) and *Mantua*.

Lombards, generally money-lenders and pawn-shoppers, gave the name to Lombard Street in London. In French, *Lombard* means pawn-broker. "The English 'lumber-room' is the Lombard-room, the room where the Lombard pawn-brokers stored their unredeemed pledges. Hence, after a time, furniture stowed away in an unused chamber came to be called lumber," and *lumbering* fellow is a useless, clumsy man.

The word 'cravat' we have from the *Cravattes* or Croats as they are now called. "There was a French regiment of light horse called 'le royal cravate' because it was attired in the

Croat fashion, and the word *cravat* was introduced in 1636 when the necktie worn by these troops became the mode."

*Bayonets* were so called because they were first made in Bayonne, from 1650 to 1660. *Carabine*, as the old Italian form *calabrino* indicates, comes from Calabria.

*Spencers* and *Sandwiches* owe their names to their inventors, Lord Spencer and Lord Sandwich, "two noble earls," as a contemporaneous epigram says:

"The one invented half a coat,  
The other, half a dinner.  
The plan was good, as some will say,  
And fitted to console one,  
Because in this poor starving day,  
Few can afford a whole one."

Many names of coins have also been proper names. The *guinea* was first made with gold brought from Guinea. The *florin* was struck at Florence; the *dollar* is a corruption of the German *thaler*, which was so called after the valley (*thal*) of Joachim in Bohemia, whence the silver was taken to make it. The *mark* was a Venetian coin, stamped with the lion of St. Mark.

Other moneys owe their names to their stamps: a shilling bore the device of a shield, and the *scudo* of a *scutum*. An eagle, an angel, a kreutzer, bear respectively the American eagle, an angel and a cross. The American who says, "I don't care a continental," sums up a good deal of history in a few words.

Sometimes names of nations become common names. *Vandals*, *vandalism*, *vandalic*, owe their origin and signification to the wanton cruelty and destruction of works of art by the Vandals.

'*Slave*,' 'slavonic,' had at first a purely ethnological meaning. But, as the stronger Teutonic races used to supply themselves with slaves from these weaker neighbors, *slave* came to have the meaning of a man deprived of his liberty, property of another.

The zouaves owe their name to the Shawi, a tribe of desert nomads, who were enlisted by the French after their Algerian conquest.

The origin of the word *tariff*, I am sure many free-traders will be glad to know. Moorish

pirates used to sally forth from Tarifa to plunder the vessels passing through the straits of Gibraltar. After a time they contented themselves (and they found it paid) with levying a heavy tax on the navigators that fell into their clutches. This sort of tax was called from where it was collected 'tariff.'

Very interesting also would be a collection of common words derived from personal names. Such are, for instance, herculean, from Hercules; hermetic, from Hermes; tantalize, from Tantalus; chimerical, from Chimæra; mausoleum, from Mausolus; philippic, from Demosthenes' famous orations against King Philip; tontine system of insurance from the Italian Tonti; galvanism, voltaic, mesmerism, daltonism, guillotine, from Galvani, Volta, Mesmer, Dalton, Dr. Guillotine; quixotic, from the hero of Cervantes's masterpiece; rodomontade from Rodomonte, one of the characters of Ariosto's poem; renard, the French word for fox, from the mediæval epic of Reynard the Fox; hectoring, from Hector; pasquinade, from Pasquino, a popular Roman satyrist; and finally let us not forget '*lynch*,' from the summary proceed-

ings of master John Lynch, nor 'boycot' and 'boycotting,' from the name of the Irish gentleman who was the first to suffer from this new form of ostracism.



## TENTH LETTER.

The new method of Language-Study and the ways of old Etymologists compared.—Instances of their vagaries—Skinner, Ménage, Blackstone, etc.

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AS a curious as well as instructive diversion, let us look back a moment at the methods adopted and results achieved by the etymologists of the old school, namely, when etymology was not a science, and linguistic laws were a thing unknown. Modern etymology is not satisfied until it has found out the first starting point of the word—the root—and then followed it downward, step by step. Old etymologists, on the contrary, had no idea of roots, and when they had discovered, or thought to have discovered, a genealogical connection between two words, they did not search for the connecting links, but simply *imagined* them. Thus a presupposed etymology was made to rest, not on facts, but on imaginations. The results must inevitably be often false, sometimes ludicrous, never certain.

The French *fusil*, for instance, Italian *fucile*, is derived from *focile*, the Italian word for 'flint.' *Focile* must be brought back to *focus*, fire. The suffix *-ile* is quite common in Italian and Latin. *Focile*, then, or *fucile*, French *fusil*, meant at first simply 'flint,' and reminds us of the 'flint-lock' of the first guns. Ménage, in his etymological dictionary, derives it from *focus-elicio*, as if it were *foci-elicium*, that is 'fire-eliciting.' He says, however, it may also be derived from *feu-sil*, where *feu* is the French word for 'fire,' and *sil*, he explains, is a contraction from *exsilire*, to jump out, to spring out; "quod ex eius et lapidis attritu ignis exsiliat," because fire springs out of the friction of the gun on the stone. In what way the 'French' word *feu* could be combined with the 'Latin' *exsilire*, and how *exsilire* could give *sil*, or how *focus-elicio* or *foci-elicium* was changed into 'fusil,' he does not take the trouble to explain.

Another instance. The word *frigate* is of doubtful etymology; Diez would derive it from Italian *fabricata*, but this is by no means certain. But these difficulties did not frighten

etymologists of the old school. According to Ménage, 'frigate' is derived from *remus*, the Latin word for 'oar.' From *remus*, he says, we had the forms 'remicus,' 'remicatus,' 'recatus,' 'frecatus,' 'fregata!' Of course, not one of these forms has ever existed. Here, as I said, is the great difference: modern linguistics bases its researches and inductions on the forms which really exist or have existed; old etymologists simply 'imagined' any form to suit their fancies. And then, how from *recatus* we pass over to *fregata*, it is not explained: no trouble is taken to explain this phenomenal addition of an initial *f*.

To derive *frigate* from *remus* is hardly better etymology than to derive, as playful Swift suggests, 'ostler' from 'oat-stealer,' or 'breeches' from 'bear-riches.' Still, in other cases, Ménage seems to have surpassed himself. That cunning animal which is known to us as 'fox,' is called by the French *renard*. The origin of this name affords a curious insight into the strange manifold elements that concur to the making of our living speech. In a famous poem of the middle ages, animals,

instead of men, are the personages, and are called by various names. One of them is the fox, and is called *Renart*. The poem became so popular, and this word 'renart' so familiar, that by and by it superseded entirely the old name of the fox. But *Ménage* has another etymology of his own: he derives 'renard' from *raposo*, the Spanish name for 'fox.' We had, he says, 'raposus,' 'raposinus,' 'rasinus,' 'rasinardus,' 'ranardus,' 'renard'!

'Denizen' is from an Old French word, *deinz*, meaning 'within.' The Low Latin *de intus* went through these successive forms, all of them historically true: 'd'einz,' 'd'ens,' 'dens,' 'dans.' In 'denizen' we have also the suffix *-en*, Old French *-ein*, Latin *-anus*; compare 'vilein,' 'villanus,' etc. So that 'denizen' means properly 'inhabitant,' and in the provisions of the city of London it was used as opposed to 'foreign.' But Skinner, in his "Etymologicon Linguæ Anglicanæ," derives it from 'Dane's son,' that is, son or descendant from the Danes, because, he explains, the Danes had once been very powerful in England and had conquered the other inhabitants. Blackstone

derives 'denizen' from *ex donatione regis*, 'by the gift of the King.'

'Mors,' as well as 'mortal,' is derived from the root '*mar*,' which means to mar, to bruise, to kill. But it was once derived from '*amarus*,' because it is bitter; or also '*a morsu vetiti pomi*,' from the biting of the forbidden apple, as that was the cause of universal death.

Where does 'girl' come from? We find in Middle English the forms *gerl*, *girl*, and *gurl*, used for either sex, a young man or woman. In Old Low German we find *gör*, a child, from which, with the suffix *la*, we have the diminutive form *gör-la*. But where does *gör* itself come from? We do not know. It is a good sign for a science to know its own limitations. The old etymologists, though, had no difficulty, not even in this case. They said that 'girl' was from the Latin '*garrula*,' loquacious!

'Crypt,' which is connected with the Greek *krypto*, to conceal, was derived from *cry-pit*; somebody was thrown into a 'pit,' where, of course, he 'cried'!

Roger Asham derives 'war' from 'warre' or

'werse,' the old form of the comparative 'worse,' "because war is *worse* than peace."

Also a queer etymology was given of the word 'demijohn.' This kind of vessel is called in Italian 'damigiana,' and owes its name to the city of Damaghan, in Persia, once famous for its glassworks. In French it is called 'dame-jeanne,' which literally means 'Lady Jane.' Hence a mythical Lady Jane was invented to explain this little mythical and less poetical 'demijohn.'

I might easily fill pages with instances of the vagaries which were once given as etymologies. But those I have given are enough, I think, to show the difference from the methods of modern research.

## ELEVENTH LETTER.

Application of Linguistic to Prehistoric Studies.—Primitive Nature of Human Tools and Dwellings as shown by their Names.—Cooking, Grinding, Weaving, Writing.—Books and Book Making: Parchment, Paper, etc.—The Limbs of our Body and their Names; the Head, the Hand, the Nose, the Eye, etc.

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THUS far I have only given you stories of words whose sounds and meanings have considerably changed from their original ones. But interesting as etymologies may be, I would be sorry if you should think that this is the whole aim and object of glottology. To trace out the origin of the sounds which are the means of our daily intercourse with our fellow men is, indeed, a study of no little importance. Still, this is only *one* object of glottology, which really aims, or should aim, at a complete study of language in all its bearings, historical, ethnographical and psychological. It is certain, for instance, that the primitive history of the Aryan nations, their original abode, their migra-

tions, their relations to one another, would never have been clear but for the light afforded by linguistic researches. There are few problems in the history of man which the science of language does not contribute to solve, or at least bring near to a solution.

How much has been said and written about the primitive state of man! How much nonsense uttered! What a painful and almost ludicrous groping in the dark! Now we learn from palæontology that civilization had everywhere the most rude and imperfect beginnings; the habitations of men were of the simplest kind—dens, in fact, not much superior to those of the wild beasts. Their tools were like those of the lowest savages.

In these prehistoric studies, palæontology and glottology go hand in hand. In the case of the Aryan family, where linguistic documents have been studied with the greatest diligence, glottology can even teach us more than palæontology. If the latter can display the tools of stone, testimony to a rude and primitive age, the former can lead us a step further back and give, through the study of words,



evidence of a state where not even such miserable utensils helped the toil of the primitive Aryans and no comfort of houses or devices of arts gave warmth and joy to their dreary lives.

Let us see first what words relating to dwelling can tell us. Every body would naturally suppose that at the bottom of words meaning 'house' there is to be found a root conveying the idea of building, constructing, or the like. In truth, however, no ancient name for 'house' refers to any such idea. All of them mean simply to 'cover,' to 'shelter,' or to 'be,' to 'stay,' or to 'bring together,' to 'bind,' thus giving evidence of a time when the idea of 'house' or 'dwelling' did not imply the idea of construction, but was anything that could afford a shelter, a cavern, a den. *House*, German *haus*, *home*, *heim*, are very likely from a root *ku* (Teutonic form *hu*) meaning to cover, to shelter. The Latin *domus* and Greek *domos* are from a root *dam*, which means to 'bind,' and only later seems to have acquired the meaning of 'building.' The Swedish *bo*, *by*, village, English *by* (as in by-law, properly a local law, a town-law, and in Whit-by, Der-by,

etc.), High Old German *būr*, to inhabit, *bū*, house, conveyed originally no other idea but that of settling down, of staying. Latin *hortus*, German *garten*, English *garden*, *yard*, mean simply 'enclosure.'

Another element very important in man's life, beside his habitation, is his nourishment. The varied methods of our cooking can be reduced to a special form, of which all the others may be said to be mere modifications: namely, cooking food in a vessel filled with water. In other words, the most important process in our culinary art is 'boiling.' Simple as it may seem to us, it has not been learned, however, until after centuries of ruder experiments. We read of peoples who eat their meat raw; others there are who cook, as best they can, the flesh of animals by keeping it between two hot stones. Others have gone a step further: they make, with the skin of the killed animal, a kind of vessel or pot, into which they put the flesh and water; then they bring it to an imperfect ebullition by throwing into it heated stones. One step further still, and we find pots made with bark of trees and covered with

clay. Later on, the bark is dropped, only the clay remains: we have thus the earthenware, into which water is poured, and heated by fire in the usual way. These are the successive steps in the evolution of cooking. Does language show any trace of such gradual development in the Indo-European family? Of course we cannot expect to find in linguistic fragments a detailed, minute exposition of facts; but that, on the whole, such evolution has taken place, we can clearly see by a comparative study of the Indo-European words which mean 'cooking.'

The root meaning 'cooking' in Sanskrit is *pach*, in Greek is *pep*. Both these roots are derived from an Aryan root *pak*, whose primitive meaning was to 'ripen.' The verb *pep-t-ein* itself is still used by Homer (*Odyssey*, 7, 119) with the meaning of 'ripen.' It is then not illogical to suppose that, also with the Aryans, at first meat was simply exposed to the burning rays of the sun to make it undergo the same process which fruits on the trees go through, namely, to make it ripen, to bring it to that state of softness and eatableness to

which fruits are brought by natural maturing, and that it was eaten after this simple performance. At length the same result was obtained with the aid of fire instead of the sun-rays, and thus we come to the process of roasting or boiling, so common with the Homeric heroes. With the advance of civilization, the verb *peptein* and its derivations were clothed, without changing their form, with the meaning of the subsequently invented processes of making food eatable, just as the word artillery, applied first to bows, catapults and other weapons of ancient armies, was made to signify all the machines of war introduced after the invention of gunpowder.

Now, as Sanskrit *pancha* and Greek *pente* correspond to Latin *quinque*, and Greek *hippos* corresponds to Latin *ack-yus*; in other words, as very often we find a labial in Greek answering to a guttural in Latin, we can demonstrate that the Latin verb *coquo* comes directly from the same Aryan *pak*, from which the Sanskrit *pach* and the Greek *pep-t-o* are derived. It follows that our own verb to 'cook,' which of course comes from Latin *coquo*, must be referred to

the Aryan root whose primitive meaning was to 'ripen,' or cook in the sun's rays.

It is noteworthy that a like evolution is to be observed in the words meaning 'cooking' in the Semitic and the American languages.

It is but natural that when the art of cooking was so elementary, the food must also have been very simple, and not many words must have been at hand to designate it. In English itself it is not very long since the word meat was reserved to denote a particular kind of food. At first it meant food in general. But the meanings of such words, especially when the art of cooking grows a little complicated, change so frequently, and sometimes so capriciously, that no further light can be deduced from them in reference to the remote times of which we are speaking.

Let us now turn to the 'tools' which so multiply the power of man. Everywhere in language we have permanent testimonials that all arts and their tools have developed from the most rude implements slowly and laboriously. The words connected with the art of the miller, for instance, (Latin *mōl-o*, Greek *mūl-e*,

German *mühle*) bring us back to the root *mar* or *mal*, which means to 'rub,' to 'bruise,' thus reminding us of the time when cereals were simply rubbed between two stones.

It is a grand sight, nowadays, to behold one of our ocean greyhounds, flying majestically over the sea, shouldering and breaking, with almost an air of unconcern, the raging billows. Who would believe that these marvellous constructions are the product of a slow improvement from logs excavated, dug out in the middle? Did we not know it otherwise, it would be abundantly testified by our own language. *Ship*, Anglo-Saxon *scip*, is from the root *skap*, to excavate, to dig. From the same root we have in Greek *skaf-os*, ship, and *skuf-os*, glass, cup. We say also 'vessel,' French *vaisseau*, Italian *vascello* (Dante uses *vasello*), that is, 'vase,' something hollowed inside.

The art of the weaver offers a very interesting subject for linguistic researches. The fundamental Aryan root is *ua*. It appears that the first things on which men practised this art, and from which they obtained the first idea of it, are the boughs and twigs of trees entangled

with each other. Little reeds and osiers were called in Latin *ui-mina*, properly 'plaitings' or 'weavings. *Ui* is the Latin form of the Aryan root *ua*. From it we have the name of the vine, *ui-tis*. Even to-day there are peoples in Africa who use as huts the natural entanglements of tree branches.

Again we receive not a little light on the origin of 'writing' when we learn that 'write' comes from a Teutonic root 'writ,' which means to 'cut slightly,' to 'mark,' to 'scratch.' The Latin *scrib-ere*, to write, which we have in so many words, as 'inscribe,' 'describe,' 'prescribe,' 'inscription,' 'scripture,' etc., comes from an Aryan root *scrabh* or *scarbh*, an amplification of *scar*, which also means to 'cut slightly,' to 'scratch,' to 'mark.' From the same root *scrabh*, with loss of the initial *s* (compare teg-ument, de-tec-tive, etc., from the root *stag*), we have also the Greek *graf-ein*, to write, and the English to 'grave,' to 'en-grave.' All these words bear witness to a time when 'writing' was done on wood or wax or other soft surface by means of a pointed instrument. -

The whole history of book-making is recorded

in the very names we use nowadays for book, paper and other things connected therewith.

‘Book’ is from the Anglo-Saxon *bōc*, properly ‘a beach-tree.’ The meaning of ‘book’ is due to the custom of writing on tablets of beechen-board. German *buche*, beech, *buch*, book, Middle High German *buoche*, a beech tree; *buoch*, a book. In Latin the book was called *liber*. Hence Italian *libro* and French *livre*. But *liber* is also the name of the bark of a tree.

The ‘paper’ on which we write owes its name to *papyrus*, a kind of reed whose inner rind was used as writing material. This ‘papyrus’ was called in Greek *bublos*, hence *biblos*, the Greek word for ‘book’ and our ‘Bible.’

‘Parchment,’ Middle English *perchemin*, *parchemyn*, French *parchemin*, Latin *pergamina*, *pergamena*, Greek *pergaménē*, was so called from the city of Pergamos, in Asia, where it was first used.

All these writings, whether on papyrus, liber or parchment, ‘rolled up’ formed a ‘volume,’ from Latin *voluere*, to roll, to turn.

The names of the limbs of our body seem



also to provoke our curiosity. Where do they come from? How were they formed? They too show traces of a very rude nomenclature, sometimes not well defined, wavering between one meaning and another.

The Greek *cheir*, for instance, meant 'hand,' but also 'arm.' The same must be said of Latin *manus*, as we have from it '*manica*,' 'sleeve.' *Cheir* itself comes from the root *ghar*, to seize; *manus*, from the root *ma*, means the 'former,' the 'maker.'

Sanskrit *kap-ala*, Greek *kephalé*, Latin *cap-ut*, and, according to Grimm's law, English *head*, came from the same root : *kap*, to contain. Their original meaning was that of a shell, 'skull.'

The Latin word for 'pot,' *testa*, has given the Italian *testa* and the French *tête*, head. In not a few other languages the name of the head means, etymologically, pot, pumpkin, shell, etc.

*Tooth*, Middle English *toth*, Anglo-Saxon, *toð*, which stands for *tanð*, German *zahn*, Latin *dent-em*, Sanskrit *dant-a*, Greek *odonta*, are all from an Aryan form *adant-a*, a present participial form from a root *ad*, to cut, to bite, to eat. From this same root we have Latin *ed-cre*,

to eat, Greek *ed-ein*, Gothic *it-an*, Anglo-Saxon *et-an*, English *eat*.

*Eye*, as we have seen, is from a root *ak*, to be sharp, to pierce.

*Brow*, forehead, and also the edge of a cliff, Anglo-Saxon *bru*, Latin *frons*, Greek *ofrús*, is from a root *blhru*, to swell, to be prominent. Homer calls Ilios *ofrúessa*, 'browy,' if I might say so, hilly.

The 'eyelid' is in Latin *cil-ium*, from a root *kal*, to cover, to veil. It was said also of any piece of ground stretching forth so as to leave a hollowness under it. In Italian *cilio* means eyelid as well as edge, cliff. In Russian *tshelo* means forehead; the plural *tshelia* means cliff. The same coincidence we meet with in the Semitic field.

The root of 'nose,' German *nase*, Latin *nasus*, is uncertain. But it seems it meant simply a stretching forth, a prominence. In Beowulf (v. 571) we read *sæ-næssas*, for 'promontories.'

Besides Latin *testa*, a pot, and perhaps Sanskrit *kap-ala*, a vase, the art of the potter has given us the word *figure*, Latin *figura*, from the root *fig*, to model, to mould. *Fi(n)g-cre* was

said at first only of modelling clay, just as the potter does. *Figura* was the result of this work. Earthenwares were called *fictilia*. Passing from the material to the intellectual world, we have had such words as *fig-ment*, *fic-tion*, the product of the imagination. In a certain sense, the poet treats and fashions the invisible world of ideas as the potter his clay.

(We may notice in passing that a kind of works of 'fiction' which in English are called 'novels'—from the Italian *novella*, a piece of news, an anecdote, a tale—are called by other peoples *romans* or *romanzi*. For a long time after the fall of the Roman Empire, while the modern Neo-Latin tongues were slowly evolving from Latin, and Latin still held its own as the language of scholars, *romans* were called the dialects spoken by the people. The same name designated tales, whether prose or poetry, in which the literature of the Middle Ages is so rich, composed in the new dialects for the special amusement and instruction of the common people and of the ladies who did not know Latin. The name has survived and is still applied to works of fiction, like nov-

els, tales, etc. In connection with the character of such literature, the adjective 'romantic' has acquired also other meanings which would be interesting to follow. But we cannot do it here: it would carry us too far from our subject.)

While 'head' and 'figure' have their names from works of the hands, *trunk* is evidently taken from the trees. (*Chest*, Middle English *cheste*, *chiste*, is from Latin *cista*, a box.)

*Foot*, Anglo-Saxon *fot*, Greek *pod-a* (accusative), Latin *ped-em* (compare *fa-ther* from an Aryan root *pa*) is derived from the root *pad*, to go.

*Finger* (fi(n)g-er) is from an Aryan root *pak*, to bind, to grasp, while French *doigt*, Italian *dito*, from Latin *dig-itus*, are from a root *dic*, to point out, to show.

## TWELFTH LETTER.

The Development of Ethical Feelings Studied in Words.—  
Ethics, Customs and Morals—Law and Right—Virtue  
and Vice ; Malice, Perversity and Depravity—Murder—  
Shame—Truth—Verity—The Ideas of Labor, Poverty  
and Suffering in Language.

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MORE interesting even than the development of dwellings, tools and the arts pertaining to material life, is it to know how those ideas and feelings have developed in man which properly constitute his morality. Some moral characteristics may be said to be common to all men. Most of them, however, change from nation to nation and from time to time, or to put it in more comprehensive words, they change according to the psychic climate of a people. Peoples that live contemporaneously and in the same physical climate, can, intellectually and morally, be wide apart. In a certain sense, even historically they are immensely separated from one another. The Hottentots of to-day, for instance, are materially our contem-

poraries ; but, from the standpoint of civilization, they are the contemporaries of the forefathers of our race who lived thousands of years ago. And as rude, imperfect, and almost beneath our ideas of man are some elements in the morals of the Hottentots, we have no reason to disbelieve that our remote forefathers may have gone through a similar stage of hardly incipient civilization ; through a stage, where the life of the soul is almost nothing, the horizon of the mind is narrow and the material part of life dominates and encompasses all thoughts and aspirations. Even when they had entered upon a stage of comparatively advanced civilization, when they had books and arts and laws and powerful organizations, religious, social and political, did their life bear the marks of a barbarism such as we find among peoples who are greatly our inferiors. As we see to-day cannibalism not only not shunned, but honored as a good and religious custom, we find the code of Manu—the code of a people whose civilization was in many ways worthy of comparison with ours—wholly shaped after the barbarous principle of retaliation. A man of the lower caste

who struck one of the higher, was to have his hand cut off. If he kicked him, his foot must be severed. If he broke a dyke, he must be drowned. Traces of such principles we find with the Romans and the Greeks. In Germany, perjury was punished by cutting the hand that was raised in taking the oath. Even with us, capital punishment is after all but a remnant of this principle, the spirit of which is set forth in the adage, "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth."

In this field, too, language can supply us with some precious materials for study. We cannot expect, of course, to find in it the complete history of the moral development of our race. To do this the linguistic materials should be considerably larger than those in our possession. Besides, it would require such a vast, minute, complete history of each word in connection with the development of each language and the historical conditions of each people, that not years, but generations, would hardly be enough for the undertaking. The result, however, would be a history of the mind and soul of our race, such as it is barely possible to dream of.

At any rate, we can at least discover, by means of linguistic researches, some of those landmarks which show how and in what directions moral life has developed.

Here too, as it was to be expected, we find that even the loftiest moral ideas and sentiments did not spring up full-fledged from the human mind, but are the result of a slow development from very humble, sometimes mean and not moral beginnings.

The word 'moral' itself, with its derivations 'morality,' 'immoral,' etc., descends from a word (Latin *mos* (accusative *mor-em*) which means simply 'custom.' So the word 'ethics' is derived from Greek *ethos*, custom. They meant, fundamentally, simply that which is in accordance with the usage of the most, which is accepted by long use and agreed upon by the majority of the people.\*

'Law,' Anglo-Saxon *lagu*, is simply that which *lies*, which is even and in due order.

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\* "It is of the very essence of custom, and this indeed chiefly explains its strength, that men do not clearly distinguish between their actions and their duties—what they ought to do is what they always have done, and they do it."—H. SUMNER MAINE, ("Village Communities," p. 191.)



‘Right’ is that which is straight, not crooked. The Latin *ius* (whence ‘justice,’ ‘juris-prudence, etc.) is that which binds; that which men are bound to.

‘Virtue,’ Latin *virtus*, meant simply strength, especially the strength of the soldier. ‘Vice,’ Latin *vitium*, conveyed the idea of something not straight, mixed up, from the root *vi*, to weave. *Malus*, bad (whence ‘malice,’ ‘malicious, etc.), meant properly ‘damaging,’ ‘ruinous,’ from the root *mar*, to damage, to hurt, to bruise. The Greek *kakós*, bad, meant also at first ‘damaging.’

‘Perverse’ is from the Latin *per-vertō*, to turn aside, from the right way; to corrupt. ‘Depraved’ is from Latin *pravus*, crooked. Horace speaks of a *pravus nasus*, a crooked nose.

Many other words which to our minds convey an idea essentially moral, had once no such meaning at all. Thus the word ‘murder,’ is from the same root as the word ‘mortal,’ and meant simply to bruise to death, to kill; for instance, to kill an enemy in battle, without any notion of moral blame in it. Likewise ‘manslaughter’ had simply the meaning of kill-

ing, in battle or otherwise, with no ethical imputation. The same must be said of Latin *cades*, a slaughter. Also the Greek *apokteino* meant to kill, whether it was a man in a fight, or an enemy in battle, or an animal in hunting.

'Shame,' whose root is connected with 'scathe,' meant at first simply a material damage or offense. The grief and mortification which now we attribute to a moral cause, was first due to corporal pain.

It is noteworthy that in Greek there is no word to convey exactly that idea of blame which we perceive and feel in the word 'lie,' since *pseudos* was said of all untruth, of a mere mistake and of a deliberate falsehood as well.

'True' is connected, by its root, with 'trust'; fixed, steady, to be trusted. Latin *verum* (whence *verity*, *veracious*, etc.) meant originally 'credible,' from a root *var*, to believe.

An important group of words we have, derived from the same root, and conveying the ideas of 'labor' and 'suffering.'

From the root *pen*, meaning to exert, to strain one's self, we have in Greek the verb *penomai*, to exert one's self, to work, to fatigue, to

suffer. Hence *penia*, poverty; *peina*, hunger; *peinan*, to be hungry; *ponos*, fatigue, weariness, suffering; *ponerós*, working, poor, a wretch, a bad man. There is no little matter for reflection, I think, in this evolution of words from the meaning of 'work' to that of 'suffering' and 'moral depravation.'

Doubtless such evolution could only take place in a social system where the poor have to work so hard that labor becomes a suffering, and so difficult it is to find one's way upward, that after useless struggles, they sink into hopeless degradation and wretchedness.

An analogous evolution we have noticed in the word *captivus*, captive, a prisoner of war, which came to mean 'miserable,' 'sickly,' in French (*chétif*), and 'bad' in Italian (*cattivo*).

*Laborare* meant also to 'work,' and then 'to tire one's self,' to suffer. Compare the two meanings in the English 'laborer' and to 'labor.' The same evolution we have again in the Neo-Latin languages. In French *travail* means 'work,' but in Italian *travaglio* is more properly said of worries and troubles.

The same thing we meet with in the Semitic

family. In Hebrew, for instance, the root *ʾasab* means 'labor,' 'weariness,' 'grief.'

When the inferior languages of semi-barbarous peoples are as well studied as those of the Indo-European family, a larger crop will be gathered in these interesting linguistic and psychologic, or if you will let me coin a word, glotto-psychological studies.

## THIRTEENTH LETTER.

The Color—Sense, and the Names of Colors—Importance of this Subject—Linguistic and Physiological Researches.

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IT would be perfectly superfluous to discourse with you, gifted as you are with so exquisite a feeling for art, upon the paramount importance of color in our relations with the outer world. We have just to shut our eyes to perceive how barren and desolate this poor vale of tears would be if it should present itself to us in that way, colorless, dark, forever !

Things reveal themselves to us through their shape, movement, odor, weight ; but none of their properties strikes us so much and so promptly as their color. When we look at people, we may not notice at once the shape of their nose, the form of their lips, the breadth or narrowness of their forehead ; but we notice at first sight, and remember as long as we have of the people any recollection at all, the color

of their complexion, whether they are dark, brown or fair. Many, in presence of a flower, a tree, an animal, a house, may overlook some important characteristics, but nobody can fail to notice their color. It is useless to dwell any longer on this point; its truth is patent. But to an inquisitive mind the question may occur: "Did men always perceive colors in the same way as we do? Did they always notice in the skies and on earth those delicate hues in which our eyes delight?" *A priori*, we should expect that in this field, as in all others, there must have been some evolution. The perception of colors, as all mental powers, must have developed and improved in the long run of generations. But whether this be true or not, how are we going to find out? Evidently the best key to the problem lies in language. If we collect the names of colors used by our remote forefathers and inquire into the original primitive meaning of those names, we shall have made a great step toward the discovery of the reach and nature of their color perception.

The subject is the more difficult as the distinctions of colors, especially between kindred

ones, are not seldom matter for discussion even among educated persons speaking the same language. Of course, far more difficult must it be to find what was the exact meaning of a color-name used some thousand years ago. Again, not unfrequently the same name of color has been used by different peoples with different meanings. The English 'purple,' for instance, is exactly the same word as Latin *purpura*, Italian *porpora*, French *pourpre*, but all of these, except the English word, mean live red. Evidently with such difficulties to battle with, this study is not an easy one. Still some researches have been made and results obtained which are worth recording. Thus it will be a surprise to many to hear that the Veda hymns, which contain more than ten thousand lines and describe the sky over and over in all its aspects and shapes, *never* mention the color *blue*. The same thing must be said of the Zendavesta, the sacred books of the Parsees, and of the Bible, and the Homeric poems as well. It is also a fact that neither the Rigvedas nor the Zendavesta speak of the trees or the earth as *green*. They call the trees fruitful, beautiful, gold-

en-hued (evidently in reference to the golden fruits), but never are they called green. Aristotle in his *Meteorology* speaks of the rainbow as tri-colored, 'red, yellow and green.'

These facts show that for a long time, even with peoples highly civilized, the perception of colors was not so vivid and distinct as it is with us, or at least their classifications and names were in a very imperfect and almost chaotic condition. The same results were arrived at by Mr. Gladstone in his *Homeric studies*, and by Professor Magnus in his researches among the savage tribes of America.

We may then safely lay down the conclusion that, however keen the power of sight may be with primitive peoples, they lack that perception of fine shades and hues which can only be acquired by a gradual education of the eye.

We can now go a step further. Granting that primitive men did not perceive as many colors as we do, *how* did they perceive those few? Our own idea of color has changed within a few years. We conceive it now as a particular movement of matter which assumes different appearance according to the nature and



rapidity of that movement. It would, of course, be absurd to expect that men did at first conceive color in any way like this. How then did they conceive it? Also in this case we must appeal to the testimony of language. It appears that they conceived it as some material stuff 'stretched' over the thing itself. As an instance, the root *arg* (or *rag*), from which we have the Sanskrit *rajatam*, silver, *rajatas*, white, *arjanas*, light, *raktas*, red, and Greek *argurós*, means to 'dye,' to 'stretch.' We have from it the Greek verb *rescin*, to color, to stretch, and the Latin *por-rig-cre*, to stretch forth.

This result, set forth by linguistic investigations, is also supported by the fact that an equally rude idea of color seems still to prevail in the minds of uneducated men, even in our days.

It remains now to inquire into the origin of the different color-names. Where were they taken from? To answer this question, it will help us to look at the way that we ourselves follow in the formation of color names. As a rule, we give to a color newly-invented, or newly-noticed and brought into prominence, the name of some min-

eral or tree or flower whose color most resembles the one in question. Thus we have the color-names 'rose,' 'pink,' 'violet,' 'copper,' 'bronze,' 'orange,' 'lemon,' 'hazel,' 'chestnut,' 'ochre,' 'ash,' etc. That is to say, we know no better way of naming or even defining a color than by referring to a substance which has that color. We must, of course, make an exception for the few names of colors whose origin is due to some mere accident, to the name of the inventor, the date of the invention, etc., as color Magenta, Solferino, Marengo, etc.

If we examine the names of the principal colors in the Indo-European languages, we find that this is the case: names of colors are also, as a rule, names of plants, minerals or some other material substance.

In Sanskrit *rajata* means both 'silver' and 'white.' 'Green' comes from the same root as 'grow'; and it refers to trees and vegetation generally.

It is difficult to trace out the first origin of 'black.' It is noteworthy, however, that *blæk* in Danish, and *bläck* in Swedish, mean 'ink.' It might be objected that 'ink' being an artificial

product, certainly not of prehistoric times, this meaning of *blæk* and *bläck* must be a secondary meaning. But it is very natural to suppose that at first *blæk* and *bläck* meant any dark, smearing substance, and were by and by restricted to that particular substance which was better adapted to dye, to mark, to write. In German *blakig*, *blakerig*, mean 'burning,' 'smoky.' In short, it is almost not to be doubted that 'black' refers us to some substance with a dark color.

'Blue,' Anglo-Saxon *bleo*, whose meaning was first near 'livid,' is not improbably connected with Icelandic *bly*, German *blei*, lead.

'White' is from a Teutonic type *hwita*, (Anglo-Saxon *hwit*, Gothic *hwēits*, German *weiss*) from a root *hwit*, to shine. So 'blank' pale, French *blanc*, white, is from a root meaning to 'shine.' Both therefore, 'white' and 'blank' refer to 'light,' the color of the light.

The Latin *niger*, black, which we have in *negro*, *nigrescent*, etc., is from the same root from which *noct-em*, *nukt-a*, German *nacht*, and our 'night' come. It means the color of the night, the absence of light.

'Yellow,' whose original color was 'light yellow,' refers us ultimately, like 'green,' to trees and leaves, probably as seen in the paleness of the late season, or when struck by the sun's rays.

This peculiar formation of color-names opens a new window, so to say, through which we can look into the growth of language. It brings forth the facility with which the human mind taking one element of a thing—for instance, its outward appearance—and applying it to other things, rises to a general abstract idea. Thus we have a practical illustration of the way in which our mind works: first, it perceives a similarity between two things; this similarity is perceived as something distinct from the things themselves: it becomes, therefore, an abstraction. This is the first step toward an induction: on a step like this all human knowledge is founded. The highest theorems of our science are but the last links of a chain of abstractions, the first of which rests simply on the approaching of two objects which have something in common. The greatest trouble is that in the immense chain of such interwoven and far-origin-

ating abstractions, it is frequently impossible to bring back each of them to its primitive source and significance. Hence very often their true value is misrepresented or misconceived, and such misconception is assumed as the basis for other abstractions which of course, having a wrong foundation, must also be wrong. So that these palæontologico-linguistic studies have also this merit, of no little importance: they may help us to find out the true origin of a certain category of abstractions, and to correct thereby the false or imperfect theories which rest on a fundamental misunderstanding of those abstractions.

## FOURTEENTH LETTER.

Names of Numbers—The Progressive Development of Calculation Studied in the Names of Numbers—Results from Different Languages.

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IMPORTANT as the color-names are for the study of the development of our perceptive life, they are not nearly as important as the origin and history of numerals for the study of the development of our understanding. It has long been a question among philosophers whether the idea of numbers belongs to the so-called inborn ideas or must be reckoned as the product of experience. Many were ready to affirm that such propositions as “two and two make four” are “necessary truths,” they are evident by themselves, and our experience cannot go behind them; they simply force themselves upon our minds. Others, J. S. Mill, for instance (quoted by Mr. Tylor), maintain that “two and one are equal to three” expresses merely a “truth known to us by early and constant experience: an inductive truth,

and such truths are the foundation of the science of numbers." The discussion among philosophers might have gone on forever, had not the researches of glottologists and ethnologists stepped in to show how facts really are. These researches demonstrate that Mill's opinion is the right one. Even such a simple conception as "three and two make five" had to be gained by slow and practical experience. There are to-day peoples who cannot count above five or four or even three or two. The low tribes of Brazil count by their finger-joints up to three only; any bigger number they express by the word 'many.' A *Pari* vocabulary gives these numerals: 1, 'omi'; 2, 'curiri'; 3, 'prica,' 'many.' In a *Botocudo* vocabulary we find: 1, 'mokenam'; 2, 'uruhú,' 'many.' The *New-Hollanders* have no numbers beyond 'two.' Other peoples cannot count up to three or four without saying 'two and one,' 'two and two.' In *Queensland* we find: 1, 'ganar'; 2, 'burla'; 3, 'burla-ganar'; 4, 'burla-burla.' In the *Kamilaroi* dialect we find: 1, 'mal'; 2, 'bularr'; 3, 'guliba'; 4, 'bularr-bularr'; 5, 'bulaguliba'; 6, 'guliba-guliba.'

All peoples use their fingers to count, and often we find the word 'hand' meaning 'five'; 'two hands' or 'half a man' meaning 'ten'; 'hands and feet' or 'one man' meaning 'twenty.' Some peoples count up to 'five' (which they call a 'hand'), and then they go on saying 'a hand and one (six), 'a hand and two' (seven), 'a hand and three' (eight), etc. In this way we have a 'quinary' numeral system. Others count up to 'two hands' (ten), and then they count, 'two hands and one,' 'two hands and two,' etc., thus forming a 'decimal' system. Others still count up to 'twenty' (hands and feet), and then count: 'hands-feet and one,' 'hands-feet and two,' etc., up to another twenty, that is forty. In this case we have a vigesimal system of numeration. It appears that the most intelligent races have soon discarded the quinary system as insufficient and the vigesimal as too cumbersome, and followed the decimal system, not so strictly, however, as to abolish all traces of the two others. Thus, for instance, we have evident remnants of a vigesimal system in the French numeration, where, instead of 'septante' one says 'soixantedix.'



and 'quatre-vingts' (four-twenties) for 'eighty.' We find also *six-vingts* (120), *sept-vingts* (140), and there is a hospital called *les quinze vingts*, from its 'three hundred' inmates. These traces of vigesimal notation are a characteristic of the Keltic race. In Gaelic we find *aon deug is da fhichead*, one, ten and two-twenties, 51. In Welsh: *unarbymtheg ar ugain*, one and fifteen over twenty, 36. Perhaps there is also a trace of Keltic influence in our counting 'three-score and ten,' 'four-score and fifteen,' etc.

How are the names themselves of the numbers formed? Let us look at some facts which happen with different peoples; they will perhaps help us to see into the origin of our own numerals. Indian scholars had given to certain words a numeral value, so as to have a kind of 'memoria technica' to remember dates and figures. Thus 'moon' or 'earth' represented 'one'; 'eyes,' 'wings,' 'arms' or 'jaws' meant 'two'; 'fire' or 'quality' meant 'three,' as they imagined three kinds of fire, and three different qualities; 'vowel' meant 'seven,' as they reckoned seven vowels, etc. It is not absurd to suppose that as 'hand' was employed to mean

'five,' they may have used a word like 'wing' or 'leg' or 'arm' or 'eye' to mean 'two.' We must remember that once the names for 'five' and 'two' being found, all the others can be formed through different combinations of these two.

The Tahitians offer also a fact worthy of attention. They are not allowed to pronounce any word which is similar in sound to the name of their chief. Therefore on the advent of a new chief with a name similar to that of a number, they are obliged to find a new word for such number. Thus instead of the word *rua*, the ordinary word for 'two,' they introduced the word *piti*, 'together,' which afterwards remained in the language. Names of this kind, which may take the place of a numeral, are found in all languages. In Latin, for instance, instead of 'two,' one might say 'copula,' bond, tie. In English, instead of 'twenty,' we can say 'score,' a notch. In Old Norse we find *flockr*, flock, for 'five'; *fölk*, people, for 'forty'; *hër*, army, for eighty.

We must also remember that names of weights and measures were formed in that way ;

namely, certain common words were given an exact arithmetical meaning of which at first they were deprived. Thus, gallon ('a large bowl'), furlong ('a furrow-long,' the length of a furrow), pound ('weight'), etc., had at first no exact numeral value.

Keeping these facts well in our minds let us proceed to study, as far as we can, the origin and formation of the Indo-European numerals. The subject is one of great interest, since numbers are one of the essentials of our civilization. Only by numbers we can measure the world and ourselves. But we must also remember that of all words the names of numbers are the first to lose their primitive meaning, and therefore to become corrupted in the common parlance. Hence the great difficulty of their study and comparison in the Indo-European languages. Many times we have to be satisfied with vague conjectures and probabilities.

To begin, the English 'one,' Anglo-Saxon *on*, Latin *unus*, seems to have at its basis a form *ai-na* from a stem *ai*, which appears as an amplification of *i*, the stem of the pronoun of third person ; so that at first it meant 'this,' 'this one.'

'Two' is the same as 'twain'; Middle English 'tweien,' 'twein,' 'tweie,' 'twei,' 'twa,' 'two.' Anglo-Saxon 'twegen' for the masculine, 'twa' for the feminine; Gothic, 'twai'; German, 'zwei'; Sanskrit, 'dva'; Greek, 'duo'; Latin, 'duo.' All from a base *dwa*, whose ultimate root is not certain.

'Three,' Gothic, 'threis'; German, 'drei'; Latin, 'tres'; is very likely connected with the root *tri*, to go over, to cross. Does this word remind us of a time when the forefathers of the Indo-European family counted only up to two, and for the first time their numeration was pushed one degree further?

'Four,' Middle English, 'feowur'; Swedish, 'fyra'; German, 'vier'; Sanskrit, 'chatvar,' 'chatur'; Latin, 'quatuor.' Its fundamental form is 'kwatwar.' The etymology is quite uncertain, although some claim to see in the Sanskrit form 'chatur,' for '(e)cha-tur,' the word *eka*, one, and the root of 'three,' as if it were 'one-(and)-three.'

'Five,' Middle English, 'fif'; Gothic, 'fimf'; German, 'fünf'; Greek, 'pempē,' 'pente'; Latin, 'quinque'; Sanskrit, 'panchan.' The

fundamental Aryan form is 'pankan,' which the Indian grammarians refer to the root *pac*, to stretch out, applying it to the hand with all the fingers stretched out.

It is impossible to say any thing certain about the origin of the four following numbers, although one may suggest that Greek *októ*, Latin 'octo,' Gothic 'ahtau,' eight, seems to be a dual, either 'two-fours' or 'two-of-ten' (compare Latin 'duo-de-viginti,' two-of-twenty, 18). 'Nine,' Latin 'novem,' Sanskrit 'navan,' may have meant the 'last,' namely the last in the series before a new order begins.

'Ten,' Gothic 'taihun,' German 'zehn,' Latin 'decem,' is in Sanskrit 'daśan,' which some have tried to rebuild into *dva-ṣan*, where *ṣan* represents the word *ṣama*, hand; hence *dva-ṣan* 'two hands.' This is ingenious, but far from certain.

The numbers from ten to one hundred require no explanation, except 'eleven' and 'twelve.' 'Eleven' is in Gothic 'ain-lif,' where *ain* is the Anglo-Saxon *an*, one. *Lif* is cognate with the suffix *lika*, ten, which we find in Lith-

nanian. Likewise 'twelve,' Gothic *twa-lif* is 'two-ten.'

The word 'hundred,' is really a compound ; of *hund*, which means 'hundred,' and *red*, the same as 'read,' to speak, to reckon, to count. This *red* is a superfluous addition ; in Anglo-Saxon we find 'hund' alone. This 'hund' corresponds to Latin 'centum' and Sanskrit 'çata,' for 'çanta' ; all of which are to be referred to an Aryan *kanta*, which is a mutilated form from 'dakanta' 'tenth,' meaning really the 'tenth ten.' So we find in Gothic *taihun-tai-hund*, ten-tenth, for 'hundred.'

We may also gather some light about the origin of numerals by inquiring into the formation of the names for large numbers, which are evidently of a more recent date than the simple ones. The Gallas to indicate a great number use a word which means 'hair.' With the Mexicans the word 'hair' means 400, or a large number. The Romans used to say 'sexcenti' six hundred, to indicate a large indefinite number. To mean a very large number, say ten billions, the Hindoos used the word 'padma,' lotus, which contains numberless seeds.

*Chilioi*, the Greek word for 'thousand' is very likely connected with *chilós*, grass; 'as many as the grass in the fields.'

The Hebrew *elep*<sup>h</sup>, thousand, seems to have meant at first 'herd,' 'flock.'

As for 'thousand,' Gothic 'thusundi,' it contains in its second part 'hund,' hundred; the first part is difficult to trace back to its source; it may be from a root *thu*, to swell, to increase, giving thus the meaning of "many hundreds."

The numerals up to one hundred are similar in all the Indo-European languages, but they have not a common word for 'thousand.' This does not mean that at the time of their separation they were not able to count up to such number; they may have done it and employed other words, such as ten hundreds, or the like. But this absence of a common word for 'thousand' proves at least this, that their counting very seldom exceeded a few hundreds; hence they had no necessity for a fixed numeral beyond one hundred. It shows also that their life must have been very simple; they must have lived in small villages or settlements, with scarcely more than a few hundred souls; otherwise a

word for thousand would have come to be as steadily used as that for one hundred. These small settlements must evidently have been inhabited by people of the same family or clan. Thus we see that even names of numbers, nay the very absence of a numeral can teach us not a little about the life and civilization of a people.



## FIFTEENTH LETTER.

The Superstitions of Language—Familiar words whose fundamental meaning is incompatible with our tenets, religious, moral or scientific.

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‘**S**UPERSTITION’ is, etymologically, that which ‘remains or stands over.’ When an opinion, political, religious or scientific, is exploded, if it still survives and lingers in some minds which either do not see it to be wrong or have not the courage to embrace the right one, that opinion is a ‘superstition.’ If a ship is wrecked and some fragments remain floating on the surface of the sea, those fragments might in a certain sense be called the ‘superstitions’ of the ship. Thus, when a word remains in a language after its primitive meaning has died off, it may be called a ‘superstitious’ word, as it has in a certain way survived itself and its original signification. The word ‘calculation,’ for instance, is from Latin *calculus*, a little

stone, a pebble, and brings us back to the time when simple arithmetical operations were almost impossible without the aid of pebbles. It contains, then, an idea which may be said 'superstitious,' as the greatest calculations can now be made without the least idea of resorting to the help of pebbles.

So the word 'electricity' is a superstitious word, since it contains the word 'electron,' amber, on which electricity was discovered, but which has nothing to do with our ways of obtaining electricity.

In this way almost all our words may be said to contain some 'superstitious' element, as our words resemble paintings where little by little the old images disappear and new ones are painted, always on the same canvas. So that the words I have put at the head of this letter, "the superstitions of language," are really too ambitious. In a certain sense they could embrace the whole field of language. But I do not mean to take them in such a wide significance. I intend to call your attention to those words only, which contain at the bottom an idea not only different from their present

meaning, but implying the existence of religious or scientific systems which we have wholly discarded ; words which we use every day, but belong in reality to a world of ideas which have long been buried out of existence.

An important category of such words we find in expressions relating to the great phenomena of the physical world, like the rising and setting of the sun and the moon, the appearance of stars and comets. It is not yesterday it was demonstrated, that the succession of night and day is due to the movement of the earth, that the sun has no bed where to sleep, and the night is not a great black coat which wraps the world. Still every day we speak of the 'setting' of the sun, of his 'going down,' of his 'rising' ; as well as of the 'rising' of the dawn and the 'falling' of the night. The French say explicitly that the sun '*se couche*,' goes to bed, and '*se lève*,' gets up. Thus, notwithstanding our great astronomical systems, our daily speech is yet teeming with ideas belonging to an entirely primitive age of mankind.

Not less striking is the use of words which imply a direct influence of the heavenly bodies

upon the fate of each individual man. The word 'influence' itself and its doublet 'influenza,' imply a belief in such superstition, as they allude to the 'influx' of planets upon our fate, the 'flowing' of their virtue into our lives ('in-fluere'). 'Influenza,' was at first an epidemic catarrh, said to be caused by the planets.

It was once believed that the star of Jove was a gay, joyful star, and a man born under it would be happy and mirthful. We still speak of a 'jovial' temperament. The influence of the planet Saturn was said to be gloomy and stern, and we call such a disposition 'saturnine.' Analogous origins must be ascribed to 'venereal,' 'mercurial,' 'martial,' etc. We still call an insane man a 'lunatic,' as if we still believed that insanity is caused by the moon.

We believe no longer in any communication with evil spirits, or conjurations, or other works of magic. Still we say: she has 'bewitched' me; she is 'charming'; his eloquence is 'magic,' etc.

We speak of 'paper,' and 'books,' and 'volumes,' although no 'papyrus' but rags are used

to make paper, and books are no longer written on 'beechen boards,' nor are they 'rolled up.'

Few fields, however, are so crowded with 'superstitious' and entirely wrong expressions as that concerning the constitution and function of our bodily organs. Our everyday physiology is full of terms so inconsistent with all our accepted notions and certain knowledge, that it is wonderful how we can go on using them without apparently at all being aware of their utter incongruity. By this time we know something about the true anatomy and physiology of our body; still we are constantly speaking of a man of 'good-humor' or 'bad humor,' etc., as if we still believed that in our body circulate four humors, the famous four humors of ancient physicians, namely, the choleric, the melancholy, the phlegmatic and the sanguine, and that on the relative quantity and mixing of these humors depend the nature and disposition of an individual. The words 'temper,' 'temperament,' 'phlegmatic,' 'sanguine,' etc., allude also to these famous four humors.

It would be very interesting to study the his-

tory of the people's notions about the construction and the functions of our body, as conveyed by popular language. For instance, we seem to have a vague notion that the brain is the centre of intellectual life, while our affections and passions are located in our heart. Why we should have such an opinion, it is difficult to say; still we may be sure that centuries will elapse before all traces of such superstition have disappeared from common parlance, before people stop saying: he is a 'good-hearted' man, a 'kind-hearted' fellow, his 'heart' is good, etc. The Greeks had even a stranger notion. All that part of psychic life which we refer to the heart or to the brain, they attributed to the midriff, because *phrèn* (from which our 'phrenology') meant at first simply 'midriff.'

Not less 'superstitious' is our stock of common expressions concerning such phenomena of nature as rain, storm, lightning, etc. But you can pursue this research by yourself. I am satisfied with having called your attention to the subject.

## SIXTEENTH LETTER.

Why Words Change their Meanings—Influence of Progress—Religious, Social and Political Crises—The Advent of Christianity—The French Revolution—Great Inventions and Discoveries—Influence of the Learned and of the Unlearned.

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WE might now inquire, as you suggest, *why* is it that words acquire new meanings, sometimes so different from the original ones, and *when* do such changes in meaning take place?

It is a good philosophic question that you propose to me, and I hasten to answer it with the greatest pleasure, since nothing is so fraught with intellectual joy, nothing is so worthy of man after all, as the study of causes. The child and the uneducated listen, astonished and wondering, to the anecdotes and descriptions of battles and sieges and other famous deeds. But the wise do not stop at facts; they want to ascend to their causes, and see the thread of

law that knits them together, fashions and moulds them. Besides, no other study better than that of the causes for which the meanings of words change, enables us to see the real intimate connection between the life of a people and its language, between history and philology.

The meanings of words change because the life of the people changes. There is a slow, constant succession of modifications in the mind of each individual man; no day goes by without causing some of his ideas, some of his ways of looking at the world, to be more or less modified. The change from day to day is so slight that generally none perceive it; but after ten, twenty, thirty years one's mind is so changed that he will often wonder how he could, years ago, have had such or such opinions on this and that. The same change takes place, more or less rapidly, with every nation, as nations are only made up of individuals. While such modifications take place in the minds of the people, what happens in language, which is the organ of their minds? Language follows and fashions itself according to the modified state of



their minds. When the ocean, in its perpetual oscillations, covers or abandons a tract of land, this land adapts itself to its new conditions: vegetation changes, grows or dies; by and by the composition of the soil is changed, and its shape and entire appearance undergo important modifications. Analogous changes happen in language in respect to the mental modifications of the people. When a certain idea is modified, narrowed or widened, debased or enhanced, the meaning of the word which conveys that idea, which is the 'sign' of that idea, is also modified in the same sense, narrowed or widened, enhanced or debased. Every now and then a new word is introduced, but experience shows that linguistic inventiveness is rather poor. We prefer, in language at least, to modify the tools left us by our forefathers than to invent new ones.

Thus, slowly, in the course of generations, as the ways of thinking and the modes of life of the people change, words alter their meanings accordingly. But, as in the life of individual men sometimes an event takes place which alone, by itself, changes their moral and mate

rial life more than it would have been changed in twenty years of ordinary daily modifications, the lives of nations are sometimes wrung by so mighty crises that the changes of a few years are deeper and wider than those of several generations. It is during such abnormal accelerations of life in nations, that the most rapid changes in language occur.

In the history of modern nations no event is recorded whose importance can compare with the advent of Christianity. As the new light flashed up over the pagan world, an immense change happened in the minds of the people. The theories of ethics, the views of life and the world, the fundamental notions of God, man, country and mankind were changed. The intellectual vision of man was, so to speak, reversed. The focus of life, which was on earth, was transferred to heaven. They saw glory where first they saw contempt; learned to despise what first they had admired; tore down political and social barriers and raised moral ones; took delight in that which they had scorned and hated; saw snakes and poison in that which first appeared as a para-

dise of flowers and music almost heavenly. How was language affected by such changes? The men, in whom the poles of spiritual life had been so suddenly turned, had no new language at their command to express their new ideas and feelings. What could they do but modify the meanings of the old familiar words so as to represent the changed state of their minds? So they did, and were not the great Christian revolution recorded in a thousand other ways, a great proof of it we would have in the changes that Latin words have undergone with the blossoming of the new civilization. 'Deus,' which meant a national or ethnical personification of one of the best human gifts, as strength, or valor, or beauty, or talent, or wisdom, came to mean 'one' divinity, impersonal, ruling the world *ab eterno*, the father of 'all' men. The names of 'country,' 'humanity,' 'brother,' 'love,' 'neighbor,' 'charity' acquired meanings entirely new. The word *fides*, which applied only to relations of man to man, assumed a new signification: the trusting of man in God, his heavenly father. 'Hope,' 'angel,' 'saint,' 'paradise,' 'grace,' 'servus' (slave), all were trans-

formed in their meanings by the magic touch of the new idea. 'Altar,' 'sacrifice,' 'religion,' 'penitence,' 'contrition,' 'humility,' are also words taken from the pagan world, but how different has their meaning become ! 'Martyr' meant simply 'witness ;' but what a glorious transformation of meaning it has undergone !

Another great sudden movement occurred with the French revolution. The result would surprise us, had we to cull out diligently all the terms and words which have been, directly or indirectly, either introduced, or revived, or made prominent and common by that political cyclone. The very terms of 'republic,' 'citizen,' 'liberty,' 'equality,' 'brotherhood' had nothing, in the previous centuries, of that peculiar glow which now lends them a kind of magic fascination. The terms of 'social contract,' 'convention,' 'solidarity,' are linked therewith indissolubly. Nor can we separate from it such words of evil omen as 'dragonnades,' 'sansculotte,' 'terrorism,' 'noyades,' 'guillotine ;' just as the words 'petroleuse,' 'dynamitist,' are connected with more recent troubles.

Changes in language, analogous to those

brought about by important social or political events, are caused by great inventions or industrial improvements. Look over our dictionaries: what an immense array of words pertaining to bows and arrows and catapults and spears, mail, armor, lie there buried as in a grave, no longer mentioned in living speech except as the names of dead people are mentioned in connection with facts of the past. All these things and their names were dropped as soon as gunpowder was invented. And what a new army of words came and is coming into use by its increasing applications! Think of all the varieties of guns, the various kinds of firearms, the mining and metallurgic industries, together with all the trades connected with them; think of the numerous words which had to be made or modified in order to designate all the new tools, implements, products and processes, and you will have an idea how great and far-reaching may be the linguistic bearings even of one invention alone. Think of the press, the steam engine, the cotton engine, the power loom, the telegraph, the telephone, the electric light and all the other great inventions

of this century. None can tell how greatly our daily stock of words will be increased and modified by these new agencies. In the words of Marsh: "It is safe to say that the substitution of cotton for linen, and the supply of tissues by large manufacturing establishments, instead of by domestic labor, have alone driven out of use seven or eight per cent. of the words which formed the staple of household conversation in the agricultural districts of the Northern States."

The great crises in the moral and political world, and the great industrial inventions, are a practical illustration of how changes take place in the meanings of words, as the people are either obliged to modify the meanings of old words, or to coin new ones.

But apart from these great and sudden changes, there are, as I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, slow but steady forces at work which bring about new words and new meanings in old words. Every man who lives, be he learned or otherwise, contributes to the development of language. In a certain sense even the most awkward and idiotic co-operate

in such development, at least by compelling the intelligent to find words to designate their awkwardness and idiocy.

Looking at men as instruments for the development of language, we may divide them, at large, into two categories: the learned, namely, those who act on language reflectively, consciously; and the unlearned, or those who use language almost as a natural power, without reflecting upon or knowledge of its nature and structure. The former may, and generally do, contribute their share to the making of the language of literature and conversation, to the introducing of new terms for arts, fashions, furniture, civilities and refinements of life. But their best work is accomplished in the highest field of thought. They are naturally the pioneers of the intellectual world. It belongs to them to 'clear the ground' by discriminating, examining and establishing the proper meaning of words, and, when necessary, to introduce new ones. The lawyer, the physician, the philosopher, the astronomer, the chemist, the artist, in fact all men who work especially with their brains, are obliged, every now and then, to in-

introduce a new word, to discuss and ascertain the meaning of an old one, and sometimes so to modify its meaning as to bend it to the exigencies of new ideas. Here you will certainly think of those numerous scientific words, first coined in this century, which are quickly becoming a part of our daily speech. Still more important, in my mind, than these new words, are those discriminations and modifications of meaning which science and philosophy bring into old and well-worn but all-important words. To some people it seems almost idle to discuss what is the true meaning of 'nation.' Still, on what we understand by such word depends mostly what kind of political arrangements we must aim at, and whether 'patriotism' or 'internationalism,' is one of the first duties of man. It matters not little for the social and political world whether by 'property' we mean one thing or another. Apparently what idler discussion than to fight about the meaning of the word 'species'? Up to a quarter of a century ago it was generally believed that 'species' was something fixed in nature, unchangeable, distinct, and by itself. Now, after the studies of



Lamarck and, above all, Darwin, it is generally accepted that 'species' means nothing naturally fixed and unchangeable, but is merely a classificatory term, as Nature presents a continuous, uninterrupted chain. In the change of meaning of this word is, after all, the 'summa' of the evolution-theory, whose consequences nobody yet can foretell. Thus the highest speculations of the greatest minds are first embodied in the new meanings of old words, and then stretch out in numberless applications, moral, social, religious and political. Because—it is useless to deny it—the mass of mankind is led on by few speculative minds who, long before the others, are able to catch glimpses of the highest verities.

But let us go back to our changes in language. Those who are not, or are only superficially educated, contribute also a great deal to the development of language, but in other directions. One of the most common ways is not only to alter words in their forms, but also to adapt them to more homely and familiar meanings than they were intended for. The word 'theory,' for instance, which was at first quite

a solemn word, as it meant a 'beholding' of a certain order of things, an abstract and speculative conclusion, in the common parlance has become synonymous with 'a mere opinion,' the passing whim of a moment. 'Policy' once was said only of the greatest of arts—that of ruling men. Nowadays the newsboy and the applewoman speak of their 'policy' in conducting their trade. 'Conducting' reminds me of 'conductor,' a leader, which once doubtless could not have been said properly of a man whose business is to collect the fares in a car. A thousand similar instances will suggest themselves to whomsoever will stop a moment to consider these phenomena. But these, which certainly are modifications of language, can hardly be said to be contributions toward the growth of it; just as the walling of a window or the narrowing of a door cannot be called additions to a building.

There are, however, some ways by which the uneducated and the semi-educated—in other words, the humblest and the middle classes in the intellectual society—contribute very largely to the growth of language: namely, by naming

the new things with which they come into contact, or by discovering new relations or new properties in things known. Think of the countless additions to our dictionaries that arise in this way! The sailor who first uses a new knot in his ropes, or discovers a new shape in the waves or in the clouds, or a new way of stretching his sail, or turning his boat, or setting his helm, must find words to designate these new things. While talking about them, either to himself or to his listeners, a word will occur which is accepted at once and by and by will become the recognized word to designate such or such another thing. The same happens with the farmer, the horseman, the weaver, the cowboy. No day goes by without some new tool or new process or new aspect of nature or men being discovered. This thing discovered 'must' be expressed. As long as it is not expressed, as long as it is dumb, it is as though it were not. But to express it, either a new word must be imagined (which as we know, is not often the case), or a word taken from another language in which the thing has already found its expression, or a new meaning must

be driven into an old word. Think of these facts which are going on without pause, and you will realize once more what might and greatness is in language, and how true it is that no religious creed or political constitution is so faithful a mirror of the nature of a people as its language.

Not less important than the discovery of new things is the discovery of new relations of things. This is the basis of the metaphoric process, which is of the greatest consequence in the development of language. As I had already occasion to mention, it is the constant process of our mind to look at things and compare them. When we discover any relation or similarity between two things, we use, in reference to the second, words which had only been strictly applied to the first. We see that a magnet attracts iron. We see that a strong, eloquent man fascinates, attracts other men to himself. The similarity is very little: the attraction by the great man is quite different from that of the magnet. Still we think such a scanty thread of resemblance enough to justify us in saying "that man is magnetic";

“he has great magnetic influence.” Wine or any other beverage which has gone sour, offends our taste and hurts our stomach. This has not very much in common with the manners of a man who is brusque, unamiable and of a fretful disposition. Still we feel authorized to say that he has a ‘sour’ temper, as if everything in him had turned acid and distasteful.

Some wines, when the bottle is uncorked, sally forth with a brilliant effervescence which we call “sparkling.” And when a man is witty, original, and his conversation teems with fine or amusing repartees, like so many little jets of firework, we say that his mind, his talent is ‘sparkling.’ The connection between the two kinds of ‘sparklingness’ is very thin; it is for the ‘imagination’ of the reader or listener to bridge over from one kind to the other. Imagination is the great life-spring of language. It is the business of the imagination to see relations between different things; it is the business of imagination to grasp them when they are so laconically uttered. It is the greatest, the most important, the most poetic part of our

reasoning and our language at the same time—this bringing near two distant things and hitting off, so to say, in one word the point which they have in common.

Not all, however, such comparisons are right and sensible, nor are the words that express them always in good taste and clear. This leads me to speak of another phenomenon in the growth of language, which is connected with this metaphorical process, and of which we hear a good deal every day. I mean *slang*. ‘Slang’ is so peculiar a fact, and is growing so steadily that it may fairly claim a chapter all to itself.



## SEVENTEENTH LETTER.

### SLANG.

Slang—Its Merits and Demerits — Purity of Language ;  
Strength and Beauty—How to Preserve and Promote  
Them.

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FIRST, what is ‘slang?’ The origin of the word is not quite ascertained. Most likely it comes to us from the Scandinavian. But, whatever its origin, what do we mean nowadays by this word? Worcester says: “*Slang*, vile, low, or ribald language ; the cant of sharpers or of the vulgar ; gibberish.” Which definition is far from being correct. It is too exaggerated. A great dictionary should be just to every part of the language ; yea, even unto slang. Many an accomplished lady will be ready to admit, with a smiling flush, that she *does* use slang every now and then ; “only for fun, you know,” and with her intimate friends. But she would

be justly indignant, if you should so construe her words as to think her guilty of using "vile, low, or ribald language," or even "the cant of sharpers or of the vulgar."

*Slang* is dealt a little more fairly by Skeat, who so defines it: "Low, vulgar language, a colloquial and familiar mode of expression." This definition would be greatly improved if it were cut in two. There should be a period after 'language.' "Low, vulgar language" seems to have been once the meaning of 'slang.' But now it is safe to say, I think, that the best people speak of slang merely as "a colloquial and familiar mode of expression." You hear very often, even among the best educated: "this is slang!" when doubtless no one means to utter a reproach for vulgar language. The teacher insists with his pupils that they must be careful to avoid 'slang' in writing. Surely he does not mean that they must not use vulgar or low or ribald language. Pupils that need such warnings, need something else far more than the study of fine language. The teacher intends simply to admonish them against the exaggerated use of such phrases, words and idioms as



are daily heard in familiar intercourse, but are not yet admitted into good literature. Indeed this and none else seems to be the meaning in which the word 'slang' is generally accepted nowadays: "A colloquial mode of expression which is not yet acknowledged by good writers."

And as such, let me say that, in a general way, I am not a particular hater of "slang." Many a time it happened to me—and to you also, I am sure—to hear ladies, educated and in every way refined, say, with an air of exaggerated compunction which is generally 'charming': "O, poor me! *What* did I say? Such slang!" Did you never feel, then, like saying to the fair penitents: "Take courage! Do not worry! here is one who is ready to fight for you and King Slang!" Indeed, I do not see why we should be afraid of slang and dislike it so. Only here, as everywhere, discrimination is necessary; and in order to discriminate soundly let us investigate how slang originates, and how many kinds of it we have.

I stated in my preceding letter that language develops mostly by metaphorical process, by applying to one thing a word which strictly be-

longs to another. In this metaphorizing we may sin against good sense or against good taste. Many metaphors in Ossian, Victor Hugo and his followers are against good sense ; many metaphors employed by uneducated or coarse men are against good taste. What we call 'slang,' grows exactly in the same way, by metaphorical process ; but our good sense and taste must help us to discriminate between good and bad slang.

Lawyers who have a very easy case on hand and are certain of success, call it, by a metaphor easy to understand, a "walk-over." Students of medicine call a corpse a "stiff." I heard somebody call a travelling tutor a "bear-leader," and "book-keeper" one who never returns borrowed books. Water is often spoken of as "Adam's ale," and a lady who felt tired and depressed was advised by a friend to "key herself up." These are all typical examples of slang, and, as such, we must scrutinize them closely.

The walk-over of the lawyers is easy to understand ; it is not only clear, but vivid and forcible. It is therefore probable that this bit

of slang may find its way into common language and books. Doubtless our language would not lose anything thereby. It is a metaphor not a whit more bold than that by which we call 'yarn' a strange and improbable story. Worcester registers 'yarn' in this sense, but marks it 'vulgar.' But now who would dare say it is vulgar, since everybody uses it, and it is after all a very good word, with a flavor of that sound humor which attaches to so many words for which we are indebted to our good, brave and mirthful "tars?" 'Walk-over' is not recorded yet in Worcester's dictionary, but I would not wonder if we should find it there in the next edition. Of course, the editor would relieve his philological scrupulousness by adding, between two brackets, "vulgar" or "common," but we would forgive him, sure as we are that in a subsequent edition he would take his notation away from "walk-over," as well as from "yarn."

Father Adam and his modes of life are so well known that when we say "Adam's ale," no misunderstanding is possible. Moreover, there is in this idiom that subtle seasoning of

wit which preserves words as salt preserves food. All the odds, therefore, are for this idiom being promoted from the ranks of slang to become a part of the common language. Many similar idioms have already run over this road, as "Noah's drink" for 'wine,' to say nothing of the well-known "Adam's apple," which is due to a silly legend that this protuberance was produced by eating the fatal apple.

A "bear leader" for a 'travelling tutor' is witty or not, accordingly, whether we ask the tutor himself or his youngsters. As a language-making element, however, it is very poor. It is too particular. No body can understand it without explanation. It has therefore no chances of taking a permanent place in language, unless some great writer takes it upon himself to introduce it and *chaperon* it.

The "stiff" of the medical students has even less chances, as not only it is confined to a particular craft, but is vulgar and coarse.

As for "book-keeper," in the sense of book-retainer, it is simply a pun. Puns may belong

to the good things of life, but there is no place for them in dictionaries.

Many would be severe against the use of the verb "to key up" for 'to tone up' one's self. Still, as we speak of the key to a riddle, the key to a book, etc., I do not see why we should object so much to an analogous metaphor taken from the musical key. The words 'tone' and 'tonic' themselves are derived from the world of music. They mean properly 'to stretch,' to stretch the chords of a musical instrument in order to strengthen its notes. Hence the meaning of 'tonic' as invigorating,' 'strengthening.'

Now, looking over these typical specimens of slang, we notice: First, that all of them consist of some kind of metaphor; second, that those of them which can be easily and universally understood, which do not hurt our good taste or good sense, are a good contribution to our language and are a desirable leaven in our daily speech; third, that those which are too particular to be generally understood, or coarse and vulgar, or are merely a *jeu de mots*, are doomed to live an ephemeral and much circumscribed

life. The trouble with what is currently called "slang" is, that much of it belongs to this last class, and is therefore destined to die without ever becoming a true part of any living language. If we had a good record of the slang in vogue fifty years ago, we would have the most ample proof of what I say. I had occasion to look over a "*classical dictionary of the vulgar tongue by Francis Grose, Esq., F. A. S.*" published in London "MDCCLXXXVIII." It is incredible how few words and idioms therein recorded have survived or would be understood at all in our day. I find, for instance, "floating academy" for the lighters on board of which were confined the persons condemned to hard labor.

'Adam's ale,' beer.

'Air and exercise,' he has had air and exercise, *i.e.*, he has been whipped at the cart's tail.

'Alderman,' a roasted turkey garnished with sausages; the latter are supposed to represent the gold chain worn by those magistrates.

'Altitudes,' the man is in his altitudes, *i.e.*, he is drunk.

'Anabaptist,' a pickpocket caught in the fact,

and punished with the discipline of the pump or horse-pond.

‘Apothecary,’ to talk like an apothecary, *i.e.*, to talk nonsense.

‘Babes in the wood,’ rogues in the stocks or pillory.

He squints ‘like a bag of nails,’ *i.e.*, his eyes are directed as many ways as the points of nails in a bag.

‘Beggar maker,’ an ale-house keeper.

‘Beggars’ bullets,’ stones.

‘Bow-wow mutton,’ dog’s flesh.

‘A brother of the quill,’ an author.

‘A brother of the string,’ a fiddler.

‘A brother of the whip,’ a coachman.

‘Butcher’s meat,’ meat taken up on trust, which continues the butcher’s until paid for.

‘A quarrel-picker,’ a glazier, from the small squares in casements, called *carreaux*, vulgarly ‘quarrels.’

‘A she-house,’ a house where the wife rules.

‘Sheriff’s ball,’ an execution.

‘Sheriff’s bracelets,’ hand-cuffs.

‘Sheriff’s hotel,’ a prison.

‘Sheriff’s picture frame,’ the gallows.

We might thus go on for pages and pages of slang and idioms more or less witty, more or less felicitous, but which have generally died away as they were not possessed of that easy and universal intelligibility which is the first requisite of all speech.

It is a good-fortune of the English language that the common parlance, of the educated classes at least, differs so little from the language of literature. Conversation is thereby enabled to make itself rich, noble and refined by all the polished treasures of prose and verse, without seeming bookish or affected. On the other hand the language of literature is kept lively, vigorous and fresh by holding itself continually in contact with and enriching itself by the resources of the language of conversation.

It has been the privilege of the English language to be the instrument to express the thoughts of some of the greatest men that ever lived, of writers and thinkers who looked into the mysteries of human nature as deep as men ever did. Still we must remember it is not these great men that make the language. They raise the standard of language, they give it



fixity, shape and dignity by bringing it up to a level with their thoughts and moulding it with the might of their genius. But the substance, the sinews as well as the muscles, of language are given by the people. Even the action of the greatest genius is but a little thing in comparison with that of the people, and the more education increases and culture spreads, the smaller becomes the influence of individuals severally, the greater that of the people at large.

This leads us up to consider the much-discussed problem of what is to be done in order to preserve the purity of our language. On this subject many writers and teachers entertained, many still entertain, some queer ideas. They seem to consider as against the purity of language all the words and idioms which are newly introduced. For them innovation and impurity are synonymous. Hence an extreme carefulness to avoid all words which, however popular, clear and forcible they may be, even sometimes necessary, have not yet received the brand of some great writer. The great writers' brand is the all-important for them, and the older, the better. Which views do not seem to indicate,

in my judgment, a sound apprehension of the nature of language and the laws of its life. If such views should be generally adopted, our written language would soon become a cold, academical, artificial thing, a skeleton instead of a living organism. Fortunately for the English language, they never had great authority or power, either in England or America. But with other nations, they held sway very long. Academies were instituted which took upon themselves to legislate in matters of language, and mark the limits within which it had to flow. But usually it turned out that language was bid to sleep in a Procrustean bed. It would be unjust to deny the good services of the French Academy to the French language; but it can hardly be doubted that, while the language has gained in finish and regularity, it has lost in strength and popular spontaneousness by being submitted to the cast-iron rules of the academy.\*

Far greater damage was wrought to the Italian language by the theories of pedantic

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\* It is said that Royer-Collard threatened to resign his membership if the academy admitted into its vocabulary the verb *baser*.

*literati* and academies. They went so far with their narrow-minded exclusivism that at length they lost all authority ; now they are simply laughed at, deprived of all authority. Even in this century there lived pedants (and I am afraid they are not all dead yet), who actually forbade their pupils to read anything which had been written later than during the fourteenth century. Some, however, were so liberal as to admit also the writers of the Cinquecento. All the rest is "modern," which in their minds means "bad," "horrible." It is difficult to imagine a sillier way of looking at language than that adopted by these powdered academicians. With the same reasonableness one might pretend that a nation should be ruled by the laws of five hundred years ago.

No, it is not by the pedantic devices of the purists that we can preserve a language vigorous and pure. Their theories resemble too much the old ways of fighting epidemics by means of fumigations, cordons sanitaires, and similar prohibitory measures. We know better now. We try to 'prevent' the incoming and spreading of such diseases by keeping from them

the means to feed upon, by a thorough obedience to hygienic rules. Considering that language is the production of all the people, the organ of their minds, the mirror of their thoughts, it is not by shutting the doors of our dictionaries against this or that word that we can hope to preserve our language pure, rich and strong. What we want is a good, thorough mental hygiene. We want everybody to be as well educated as possible, we want every body to think clearly, strongly and cleanly in order to use and understand clear, strong, sound language. If all the people were perfectly educated, their minds would be quick to discover new things, to apprehend new relations of things, to form new thoughts, to discriminate between good and bad, refined and coarse; and new words and idioms and felicitous hits of expression would flow in and make a language more rich, various, noble, manly than the world has yet seen. Because, we must remember, to make a rich and powerful language, it is not enough to have a big dictionary where thousands of words are recorded. It is necessary that these words

be in current use among the bulk of the population, so that as soon as a speaker utters one of them, he is immediately and thoroughly understood by the whole audience. It must be like the striking of a chord on a musical instrument : as soon as struck, it must vibrate in the hearts of all the listeners. We may say of words what is said of the circulation of money. This circulation is not represented by the bulk of money of which a people is possessed, because it might lie idle in banks or vaults ; but it is represented by the bulk of money multiplied by as many times as it is exchanged in the course of one year. Likewise, the real linguistic wealth of a people does not depend on the number of words of which its dictionaries can boast, but is determined by the actual use of the mass of those words.

To conclude these remarks, should a young man ask my advice, I would tell him to remember that language is not a dead thing, but a living one, and all the minds of the people contribute to its life and growth. Therefore, do not be a prig, do not be a pedant. Try first to get a good education, develop your imagina-

tion, educate your taste, strengthen your logical power, and then trust to your judgment. Whenever you hear a new word or idiom which is clear, forcible, apt and decent, do not be afraid : use it, and go ahead.

## EIGHTEENTH LETTER.

Synonyms : When and by Whom They are Used—Reason of their Use—Inadequacy of Language—International Synonyms.

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YOU have often heard, I am sure, that, to speak exactly, language has no synonyms, that is to say, it has no two names for one ~~and the same~~ thing. This is true in the main when we speak of languages that have received a certain development and degree of perfection. It is, however, not true of the languages of the lowest tribes, with whom language is in such an unsteady condition that sometimes the whole of the vocabulary is changed in the course of fifty years. In these continual, and rather irregular changes, when the old expressions are not dead yet entirely, nor have the new ones settled, so to say, in the language, there must needs be several words which are used to denote the same thing. In the same way, when we find

even in such a highly developed language as Sanskrit some one hundred names for the horse and fifty for the dog, it is natural to suppose that some of those names were used indifferently and with the same meaning.

That we have got rid of such cumbersome wealth, and that we have assigned to each word a particular meaning, shows the greater perfection of our languages, as well as the increased analytical power of our minds. Still we speak of synonyms, meaning thereby, as you know, words importing almost the same ideas, not exactly the same, but ideas so nearly related that it requires sometimes much reflection to find out the difference. What are these synonyms? How and why do we use them? Is there any necessity for them, or can our languages get rid of them as they did of the true synonyms such as are to be found in primitive languages?

Such questions are not without their psychological as well as philological importance. Here we can surprise our minds at work, and see how little we really know, and that little how imperfectly! Man, it is said, is the measure of the universe; but as soon as we step out of the



material world, our processes and calculations are so rude, so irregular, so deprived of a universally recognized value, that the roughest ways of calculating of the savages would in comparison seem perfection itself. Still, however imperfect the proceedings of our mind, they are far superior to the instrument by which it gives account of its achievements. Those who confuse language with mind or thought, have only to look intimately into their own thoughts and try to clothe them with words, in order to see how shabbily they have to dress them, and how inferior language is to our mind. Ideas, regal personages, stately and fit for the purple, have to go about in rags like beggars, nay, sometimes these very rags fail them and they have to borrow of one another. When I say a word, *goodness*, for instance, I have in my mind an idea which is not entirely clear to myself; it is something made up of my personal experience, of the good things I have seen, the good deeds I have witnessed or heard of, the good people I have met, what I read, what was taught to me, etc. Even as I may know a person very well and easily distin-

guish him among a crowd, still I would be pretty much embarrassed if I were called upon to describe the shape of his mouth and nose, the color of his eyes, his height, his age; so this idea of 'goodness' I know well enough to distinguish among many others, but it would be almost impossible for me to give a clear definition of it, stating all its elements and features. If so dim and indefinite is the idea that I myself have of this particular thing, what is the idea that I call up in your mind when I say the word "goodness"? Certainly one similar to my own, since you live in the same moral environment where I live, and have imbibed, through teachings, readings and experiences, about the same ideas as myself. If you had lived in another milieu, for instance, among cannibals, we would not agree so well, as very likely you would throw into the idea of 'goodness' such acts as that of eating your servants. Such as it is, however, your idea of goodness does not exactly coincide with mine. It would be a miracle if it should, since your personal experiences, your reading, your acquaintances, and all those conditions of life from which we form our

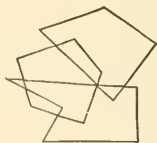
ideas, have *not* been exactly like mine. So that if I should, in a very awkward way, represent graphically our ideas of goodness, they would require two different figures, like these, for instance :



In the same way, when I say “honest,” “honorable,” “upright,” I have myself a somewhat vague idea of what I mean. I can give, if called upon to do so, some characters and features of such ideas, but by no means an exact description. My description would be as far from a truly philosophical explanation as the description of a region by an uncultivated traveller differs from the map of a geographer. And I do not think that I do you wrong if I say that also in your mind the ideas called forth by such words as “honest,” “honorable,” “upright,” are somewhat dim and ill-defined. And also in this case, had we to shape forth our own separate ideas by geometrical

figures, we may be sure they would not coincide.

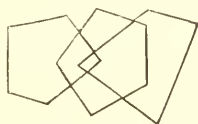
Another observation we have to make. If I consider the ideas of "upright," "honest," "honorable," and try to analyze all the elements of which each of them, in my mind, is composed, I see that some elements are common to all of them, that these ideas are not entirely distinct from one another, that not only the regions they occupy in the ideal world are dimly known, but these several regions encroach upon and intersect each other; so that had I to represent them with graphic signs, these signs would not be apart from one another, but would be grouped and interwoven in many ways; thus, for instance:



Indeed a graphic representation of our idealogic world would not be a systematic concatenation of circles with one or several centres, but

rather a complicated texture of figures of all kinds.

Words which convey ideas very closely related, that is to say ideas which in the ideal regions have some part of the space in common, are called synonyms. "Ire," "anger," "wrath," are synonyms because the ideas which they convey are not entirely separated from one another; because their graphical representations would necessarily overlap each other.



Synonyms then exist because of the incomplete distinction of our ideas. Until we shall have divided and classified all our intellectual possessions as precisely as a well catalogued library or as a honey-comb, we shall need synonyms, that is to say, we shall need synonyms as long as we shall speak, because no sooner have we brought some order and classification into our ideas than new ones arise, by which the former have to be changed or displaced or

given up. The incomplete distinction and the indefiniteness of our ideas explain the existence of synonymical expressions. But why do we use them together? Why do I say that "Mr. C—— is a thoroughly reliable, honest, upright man?"

The reason of this fact must also be sought outside the field of language. When I want to convey one of these abstract ideas, I feel that I have myself but a dim conception of it, and that it is but imperfectly set forth by the first word I use. I feel, besides, that in your mind there must also be about the same indecision as to the idea contained in my word. Therefore I throw out, almost by instinct, some cognate words, so as to be sure to cover all the ground of the idea which I especially want to convey. Of course, my choice of synonymical expressions will be good in proportion with my knowledge of the language, and the clearness and strength of my thinking. If I am ignorant of the language and my thinking is loose and poor, my synonyms are very likely to turn out a useless heap of words, a cumbersome verbiage rather than to add light to my speech.

In analyzing the meanings of synonyms, does etymology and knowledge of roots afford us any light? Up to a certain point it does. Of course, use modifies a great deal the meanings of words, especially of the abstract ones, but at the bottom of such variations we can always find a primitive meaning which can explain all the subsequent ones, and the key to this meaning we find, as a rule, in etymology. Coleridge said a very apt thing when he advised us, in order to get the full sense of a word, to present first to our minds the visual image that forms its primary meaning. And, as I said, this primary meaning is given us by etymology.

You may also observe that we use synonyms mostly when we want to convey abstract ideas, that is when our thought turns upon subjects where ideas are most difficult to be clearly conceived and neatly separated. We do not use synonyms when we speak of stones, animals, coins and utensils. In the English language, where the most elementary ideas are generally expressed by Anglo-Saxon words, while the most complex ideas, pertaining to literature,

philosophy and science, are expressed by words taken from the Latin vocabulary, we must naturally expect to find the greatest quantity of synonyms among words of Latin origin. In fact, in the treatise of synonyms edited by Whately, where more than 450 words are examined, scarcely 90 are of Anglo-Saxon origin.

A peasant generally does not use synonyms. He may use literary or scientific words *mal à propos*, but he does not use synonyms for the simple reason that his uncultivated mind does not perceive, between one and another idea, the subtle lines and shades which are plainly visible to an educated mind. Hence he does not feel the necessity of selecting among his vocabulary in order to express them. Just as a carpenter or a stone-cutter does not feel the necessity of those fine, well-studied touches which form the despair of the great sculptor—the despair and at the same time the glory. Because these difficult repeated attempts to clothe an idea with the most perfect dress, whether it be of marble, colors or words, afford some of the greatest joys that our minds are capable of. It



is also to be noticed that, through one of those intricate processes which form the inscrutable wonders of our psychic life, while we find an ineffable intellectual pleasure in choosing our words and polishing the expression of our thoughts, intensity of emotion and strength of feeling bring out in full display the resources of our dictionary. As Dr. Abel well remarks, "Devotional feeling evokes the treasures of the soul and of the language. Discussion and epistolary correspondence have a like tendency, and the charm of letter-writing in no small degree arises from the employment of careful and polished phraseology beyond the wants and usages of our intercourse."

Another fact we must consider in connection with synonyms, to which it is not usual to pay much attention. Besides the synonyms of which we have just been speaking, there are also some that I would call "international synonyms."

Let me explain. If you look at the languages now spoken by the civilized nations of Europe, you will see that they have many terms in common, having changed them just enough to give

them a native look. This is especially the case, for English and German on one side, English and French, Italian, and the other Neo-Latin languages, on the other. We find, for instance, "honest" in English, "honnête" in French, "onesto" in Italian; "amiable" in English, "aimable" in French, "amabile" in Italian; "tempest" in English, "tempête" in French, "tempesta" in Italian; "audience" in English, "audience" in French, "udienza" in Italian, etc. We should be greatly mistaken, if we were to believe that such words are true synonyms. Although they are mere national disguisements, or idiosyncratic transformations of the same Latin word, they have assumed in the several languages different shades of meaning, which sometimes mislead us in the interpretation of foreign idioms.

Again, when you want to translate the English word "friend" into a foreign language, if you turn to your dictionary, you will find beside "friend" the French "ami," the German "freund," the Italian "amico." It would seem that these four words correspond exactly to each other and are absolutely equivalent. In

fact, however, they are not. "Ami," for instance, is far from being the exact correspondent of "freund." A Frenchman, addressing a man with whom he has but the slightest acquaintance, or caressing a boy whom he has never seen before, calls them "mon ami." Indeed, it is not unusual in Paris to hear this epithet bestowed on a dog. The German, on the contrary, addressing a person, uses the word "freund" very seldom, and that only when speaking to a very dear friend and on particular occasions. The English "friend" may be said to waver between "ami" and "freund"; not so prodigally lavished as the French, not so earnest and binding as the German word. The Italians use their "amico" almost in exact correspondence with the English "friend."

Likewise, many other words which in our dictionaries are given as the true translation of corresponding foreign words, in fact translate these only more or less approximately.

Meanwhile it is evident that, if we select a group of such cognate words and analyze carefully the various meanings in which they are commonly used by different peoples, we

have therein a means to find out what the ideas of these peoples are on particular subjects, and to infer thence certain national characteristics and habits. This leads us to say a few words about a new branch of science which makes its object to study the characteristics, the nature, the soul of each several nation. Every people presents certain mental traits peculiar to itself, and it is one of the most interesting studies to bring forth in its salient lines the image of its mind. The Germans call this science "Völkerpsychologie"; we might call it, if you do not object, folk-psychology.

## NINETEENTH LETTER.

Language and Folkpsychology—Philosophy of Language—  
Comparative Studies—The Idea of “ Love ” in the Latin  
and in the English Languages.

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IF we desire to penetrate into the ‘ soul ’ of a people, none of the products of its activity should be left aside in our study. Its art, its laws, its religion, and all the facts in which some of its ideas are imbedded, have a right to claim our attention. It is evident that language is entitled to a large place in such studies. Although not perfect, it is yet the best instrument that we have for the representation of our ideas. Many an idea is formed in our minds which dies unuttered and, so to say, unborn. But by far the greatest number of those ideas which are born at all, are consigned to language rather than to any other mode of expression, like painting, sculpture or music. Language, then, is still the most important element to study in order to draw, if I may say so, the

psychic map of a nation. "Every race," Marsh says, "has its organic growth which impresses its own peculiar form on the religious ideas and the philosophical opinions of the people, on their political constitution, their legislation, their customs, and the expression of all these individualities is found in the speech. In this are embalmed that to which they have aspired, that to which they have attained. There we find the record of their thought, its comprehension, wealth and depth, the life of the people, the limits of their culture, their appetencies and their antipathies, whatsoever has germinated, fructified, ripened and passed away among them; yes, even their shortcomings and their trespasses."

In nowise can we better estimate the mental development of a people than by looking at its dictionary. As "notions which are the common and recognized property of whole nations or important national sections, come to be expressed by means of single words or standing phrases" it is evident that the stock of words in current use is a good measure of the intellectual horizon of a people. Without ever

having heard a word about Germans or Apaches, it is enough to look at their dictionaries to understand immediately the immense gulf that separates these two civilizations. It is enough to see how poor the English dictionary is in truly English words pertaining to music, to understand that the English are not a musical nation. On the other hand, one look at their unparalleled collection of words relating to commerce, church, or legislation, will show some of the most important directions in which the Anglo-Saxon mind has developed. Thus even the absence of certain words can testify to certain traits of the national mind.

From these comparisons at large between the dictionaries of two or more peoples, we can narrow our researches to compare the words concerning one particular branch of ideas or feelings. We may assume as self-evident that "a nation to have many words for a concept, must have been much at work upon it, must have developed and varied it and nicely shaded it off. . . . When defining significations with exactness, the dictionary assumes the dignity of a psychological thesaurus, and be-

comes a vivid and boldly delineated sketch of a national type."

Dr. Abel, from whom I have just quoted, has given us a very interesting essay of comparative research concerning the idea of "love" with several nations, the most important for our purpose being the Romans and the English.

In Latin we find mainly four words expressing the idea of love: 'diligere,' 'amor'; 'caritas,' 'pietas.' The first two words expressed a spontaneous affection; the other two a dutiful affection, an affection given because of duty. "To the Romans spontaneous inclination either rested upon a feeling in which intelligent recognition of personal worth had gradually ripened into a warmer appreciation of the goodness and amiability of the individual beloved; or it was pure feeling which, welling up from the secret depths of the soul, and defying the restraints of ordinary reflection, might rapidly run through all the various intervening stages between mere gratification of the finer susceptibilities and the mighty flow of an overpowering passion. The former more judicious and discerning kind of spontaneous love the Romans



denoted by 'diligere'; the latter more impulsive one by 'amare.'

"In dutiful love also two stages were acknowledged—'caritas' and 'pietas.' 'Caritas' is the moral sanction bestowed upon the bonds of nature that links us to parents, brothers, sisters and tried friends—the loving allegiance due to those associated with us as mates and helpful companions in our earthly career. 'Pietas' looks in the same direction, but from a higher point of view. Lending to the ethic glow of loyal attachment the more sublime sanctity of religion and faith, it regards fidelity to relations and allies, not as a mere moral and intersocial duty, but as an obligation to the gods themselves. The sphere of 'pietas' extends not quite so far down, but reaches higher up than that of 'caritas.'"

'Caritas' and 'pietas,' expressing a feeling which is born with us and exists even if we do not display it, have no corresponding verb. The other feeling which implies an active energy of our soul, has given birth to two verbs, 'diligere' and 'amare.'

The Romans had also a more general and

less definite word, 'affectus.' It was used in polite society as a less decided and more conventional term for 'love,' almost in the same way as we use the word 'attachment.'

As to the study of the same idea as it is represented in the English language, I beg to quote Dr. Abel's observations in full, also to give a good demonstration of how the study of words can be made a study of things, and philology can be associated with philosophy and psychology :

"The Englishman's love is always a free gift depending more upon the will of the giver than upon social relations or kinship. Its various kinds differ from each other, not according to the relative condition of the parties concerned, but according to the warmth and coloring infused by personal feeling. When the national mind is so disposed, it is only natural that almost every one of the English words for 'love' should admit of being applied at will, independently of all other personal relations.

"The most general designation is 'love.' Originally the passion which seeks to enjoy the presence and sympathy of the beloved, has

gradually become to be far more than this. With the desire for sweet communion it unites a more or less prominent spiritual trait, ennobling the passion and enlisting it into the unselfish service of the ideal. It thus becomes a real enthusiasm for the beautiful and the good, which for the time being is seen embodied in the beloved object, and which by most men is acknowledged only in this short span of the spring-time of the soul. It culminates in a transient self-exaltation of his own nature, during which man is apt to fancy he has found a charm that shall give him a new joy in existence, impart a fresh purity of will, and bestow increased fitness for the battle of life. If love continues after its enchantment is gone, it ripens into 'affection.' Affection is love tried and purified by the fire of intellect. It comes on to the scene when, the veil of phantasy being lifted, the beloved object is seen in its true nature, and discovered, if not without failings, still worthy of the warmest appreciation. Affection comes slowly but abides; giving more than it takes; and as a touch of tender gratitude for a thousand favors received, a thousand remembrances treasured

up, and unfading happiness accorded. According to English notions, an affection through whose limpid depths the gold of the old love is plainly visible should be the fulfillment of marriage.

“Not only to woman and the beloved, however, are both words applicable. As regards ‘affection,’ the mingled deliberation and feeling latent in it certainly restricts the word to individuals whose close acquaintance has engendered mutual esteem; but relations of this nature are not necessarily confined to women. They may, on the contrary, extend to relatives and friends of whom we have never been enamoured, but towards whom, from long and intimate intercourse, we are drawn by a feeling akin to love tested and tried. Parents and children, good relatives and dear friends, feel affection for one another. Love likewise expands in meaning. It may either sink to an exaggerated fondness for trifles, or else rise to a devout appreciation of the great spiritual entities in which we behold our highest possessions. It is said of a man’s sentiment for his country, for humanity, science, religion, and in its sublimest

application, for God. In order to be able to speak of his love in this sense, man by humility, piety and enthusiasm, must consecrate himself to the higher powers, whom he may serve through his righteous will, though he can not exalt them by his feeble acts. The confidence springing from this piety encourages man to speak of the love of God to himself.

“For a particular variety of the love of man there is a special word, ‘charity.’ It is love moderated to affection, but extended to all our brethren alike. When, by all sorts of experiences and the gradual growth of prudence and worldly wisdom, youthful enthusiasm begins to flag, its place should be filled by the more temperate and imperishable charity. Charity contends that although all men around us, and not the least we ourselves, are erring creatures, we are bound to love our neighbour for God’s sake. Charity proclaims that since God has permitted man to sin, it behooves man to embrace with forbearing love those that yield to temptation. Recognizing many excellent qualities in him, ‘affection’ loves and cherishes some sympathetic individual; while ‘charity,’ thinking less

of human foibles than of the striving energy for good instinct in man, loves all men alike. The one emanates from the soul's longings to acknowledge the good, the other from the duty of forgiving the bad. The one is glad, the other sad; the one of this world, the other of a better.

“As charity indicates a specific kind of ‘love’ extended to *all* men, so ‘fondness’ represents a peculiar shade of that meaning of the term which applies to individuals. ‘Fondness’ implies a deep devotion without including either the staunch and rational esteem of ‘affection’ or the passionate fire of ‘love.’ It is a love for the sake of the dear habit of loving, ready to dispense with any particular worth in the beloved, and, if it must be, even with return. It is a sort of instinctive and uncontrollable clinging that cannot free itself from the object it has chosen to adore, that forgives all, denies nothing, and caresses, even when blame or coldness is deserved. Though it may also extend to friends, in its excessive tenderness the term describes principally relations between lovers, or between parents and children. It often origin-

ates in a warm heart, inert judgment, and not very active self-esteem; and although it may become foolish, never loses the deep glow of true and heartfelt affection. To the genuineness of its sympathy the word is indebted for its prerogative in remaining applicable in cases of a nobler nature. Where by the context every suspicion of fondling is shut out, 'fondness' may be used for a satisfied and restful attachment, less active than affection, less exacting than love, but just as certain and reliable as both. A tinge of forbearing and voluntary fondness should be given to every description of love.

" 'Passion' often denotes emphatically that passion which occurs most frequently—love.

"Going back the whole way we have come, and entering a province where there is yet no question of love, we are met by 'liking' and 'attachment.' Liking is a vague interest springing from the feelings, which may, or may not, deepen to real attraction. Between young people of different sex it certainly has a remarkable tendency to pass through the whole morphological series, of which it is the first

stage. Hence its uses are manifold. Though she may be far enough gone to confess her love to herself, a modest maiden still speaks of 'liking'; while with just as good a right a lieutenant, referring to a comrade whom he has seen to-day and may forget to-morrow, exclaims, 'I like the fellow, egad!' Attachment lies between liking and love. It arises from an attraction of the intellect or of the feelings, the latter being mostly the more powerful agency of the two. When mutually experienced by man and woman, it has a tendency to imperceptibly draw them towards the Niagara of love. It frequently marks a stage in which a seeming surface liking is unconsciously nourished by passion secretly welling up from the hidden depth of the soul. When occurring between persons of the same sex, the feeling is almost entirely restricted to individuals in the same social position, seldom extending to subordinates. Attachment, as a rule, links us to equals or supposed equals. Liking is so vague and love so impetuous, that both may be felt for subordinates as well as for equals or superiors; affection so zealously takes care of its object that, in a sense, it aspires to



superiority for the sake of protection ; attachment, on the other hand, would be a thoughtful devotion—devotion because of the affection manifestly present, and thoughtful because self-possession is sufficiently preserved to prevent the overpowering effect. Conscious reserve is a counterweight to affection, and, asserting itself more strongly towards subordinates than equals, makes the word inapplicable to the former.”

The same kind of investigation can be pursued with words related to other orders of ideas : God, justice, law, penalty, crime, valor, cowardice, etc. It is clear that in this way we can draw sketches of the nature of a people that cannot fail to be interesting and to point out characteristics which otherwise might be overlooked. Only we must be careful to see that our investigation is complete on either side, and that the facts are looked at in their true light, lest we might hasten to false conclusions. Nothing is more common than to hear or come across in books some summary statements concerning the character of a people as conceived from superficial examination of one

or two words. Landor for instance ("Imaginary Conversations") discovers in the Italians a perversion of moral sense, because they call a bracelet or an ear-ring a 'joy,' *gioia*. But he does not notice that the English do the same thing, as 'jewel' is merely the transformation of Italian *gioiello*, 'a little joy.' This does not imply any perversion whatever; it is a natural transition from the thing itself to the pleasure it gives us to look at it; it is an illustration of the well-known line, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Trench and all those who claim that language was given to men all ready-made and perfect, discover in the old meanings of our words traces of a moral purity superior to that of our days. But this is against all facts; on the whole, morals have progressed just as everything else, and the history of language shows in our words traces of lower and coarser meanings. Even Marsh, generally so wary and cautious, makes a considerable slip on this point. Having observed that the Latin idea of the future is conveyed by one word alone (*amabo*, I shall love), while the languages derived from Latin have a future formed with an auxiliary

(French *j'aimerai* is *j'aimer-ai*, *tu aimer-as*, etc.; see "Philosophy of Words," p. 154 f.), he tries to give a reason for this different system. In the Middle Ages, he says, during which the Neo-Latin languages were formed, society was all unsettled; there was no security, no confident trusting in the morrow, in the time to come. Therefore the idea of future was more of a dark cloud to them than a clear conception. Hence practically they needed no future tense; everything was referred to the present; and when it was really necessary to speak of a time that was not yet, the present of the auxiliary was made to do the service of the future. 'I have to love,' not *amabo*. This is all very fine; but there is an objection. Now glottology has shown that the Latin *amabo*, which looks like a simple word, is really a compound, made up of the stem of the verb *amare*, and the root *ba*, which means to be: "I am to love." So the explanation given by Marsh, which at first seems so satisfactory, turns out to be a castle in the air.

Others have tried to infer the whole nature of peoples from the words they commonly use

in meeting friends or acquaintances, as "How do you do?" or "*comment vous portez-vous?*" etc. It is superfluous to add that such inferences, whatever they may be, are entirely groundless. No large generalization can be legitimately reached without a great number of facts being studied. These acrobatic inductions from one word to an ethnographic trait always remind me of the man who was busy trying to solve a problem in which, the length of the ship being given, the age of the captain was to be found. The application of linguistics to the study of national characteristics is yet a very young branch of the science. Its importance will be appreciated when the facts at its disposal are more numerous; one reason more for it to be wary and slow in its inductions.

## TWENTIETH LETTER.

### CONCLUSION.

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NOW before taking my leave of you, my fair and sympathizing listener, let me add a few concluding words. Did I tire you? I hope not; you told me I did not, and I believe you. Our friendship is so sincere, and you are so frank that you would always tell me your mind unhesitatingly. At all events, if ever I did tire you, prithee forgive me; as Manzoni says at the end of his great novel: "I did not do it intentionally." At the beginning we saw how words are made; how from an ancient root countless words are derived, which assume the most various shapes with the most various meanings; how the bulk of our daily speech, in fact of the speeches of the most civilized peoples, can be traced back to a few hundred roots from which they have grown forth.

Did I teach anybody to make etymologies? I hope not, indeed! Rather I intended to teach *not* to make etymologies. Etymology nowadays, especially in the Indo-European family, has been so well studied that no corner of the field has been left untouched. Therefore, to attempt to introduce an etymology without studying the results ascertained by long and learned research, without consulting the standard books on the subject, is just like talking of stars and nebulæ without having read one single book on astronomy.

In the second place we saw, through various instances, that words not only change their shapes, but also their meanings. Very often we find a word conveying a meaning entirely different from its primitive one. There is, however, no *saltus*, no break: we always find, by historical investigation, that the first meaning is linked to the latest one by a continuous chain, and underlying both is one common meaning which contains them in embryo.

The history of such modifications of meanings, we saw, can be made to throw light upon certain phases in the life of peoples; successive

improvements in human dwellings and tools, in the perception of colors and the formation of numbers. Religious, political and social revolutions, as well as mechanical inventions, are testified to by the evolution of language. In fact a complete history of our words would almost be a history of our civilization.

Lastly we have studied the relation of words to our ideas, considered especially in the nature and use of synonyms. We saw, also, that by studying and comparing the words and expressions of a people we may gain a clear view of its intellectual range, and bring forth some of its most notable characteristics.

Such studies, if I am not mistaken, are not devoid of great importance. In the light of these theories, a dictionary is no longer a dry record of signs with a certain meaning, or, as it were, a herbarium of dead leaves. It is the living record of the intellectual wealth of a people ; it is the inventory of its most precious treasures.

Nor must we omit another aspect of the importance of words. They not only are the expression of our thoughts, but they react on us

with a strength that is appalling. Bacon once remarked that men think they rule their words, but very often their words rule them. Many times a man has an idea in his mind, confused, undetermined; once that idea comes forth, clothed with apt words, its power is increased a thousand-fold. For good and for evil, there is no power that equals the power of words. When a social or political crisis is impending, millions are brooding over the evils they suffer or they think they suffer. But their ideas are confused, uncentred; they feel as if they were in the dark, groping in vain for an issue; they feel like a child who complains of something that aches him, but does not know what, or how. But let a man step forward and formulate in clear words the evil that troubles all, and shape forth their needs and their demands. That man becomes the hero, the leader: his words are like a rocket in a ton of gunpowder. Every man now *sees* what he first only felt vaguely. His will is aroused, his resolution is taken, and, whilst a little while ago a few temporary concessions might have solaced his uneasiness and stayed any outbreak, now nothing



short of full surrender or brutal repression could lead him back to his former condition.

Not only in that part of our life in which interest mingles with feeling do words lead us even against or beyond our intentions; but, also, and not less, in the most abstract regions, words wield a power that is difficult to measure. How many theories of science, philosophy and theology, have lived through generations of men, making some happy in their faith, sending others to the gallows or to martyrdom, and all the while resting on a mere trick of words, unskillfully chosen or badly understood! We think only through words, and if we do not apprehend the full reach of our and other people's words, we must needs come to conclusions not entirely right. "The words of a language containing a synopsis of all the principal things in the world, with a list of their qualities, agencies and effects, the distinctions drawn by them are unconsciously adopted, and necessarily become our own views of the general arrangement of the universe."—"The notions represented by them are constituent portions of our intellectual self; they regulate the mo-

mentary operations of our mind.”—(Dr. Abel, “Linguistic Essays,” p. 150.) It is impossible to overrate the importance of words in this respect. As we apprehend the whole material and spiritual world only through words, it follows that the more exact and clear and rich our dictionary is, the better instrument we have for the operations of our mind. In other words, our mind, in its progressive development, works on the language and makes it finer and nobler and richer while trying to convey its more noble and fine acquisitions. On the other side, the language helps the mind by giving it an instrument of expression finer and more perfect than ever. Likewise the student of physics, by successive experiments, improves his instruments and tools; these, on their side, help him along to further progress by giving him better means for measuring, observing and testing.

It is also to be remembered that in all these things pertaining to language, one man alone can do very little. Language, from beginning to end, is a social, not an individual production. Language is perhaps the highest type of

organization, in whose making and use every individual takes a share in proportion with his mental activity. No matter what sometimes a single man may do for good or for evil in the social or political field, in language the true sovereignty rests with the people. Tiberius, being reproached for using a solecism, answered, half playfully, half scornfully, that he would make it right with an imperial decree. "Cæsar," said Marcellus, the grammarian, "thou cans't give the Roman citizenship to men, but not to words."

At school we are taught to avoid some words and idioms, and to use some others in a way a little different from the common one, which is apt to be loose or blundering. All of which is well. Still we must not for a moment indulge in a belief that such correctings and forbidings can have any great influence on the purity and beauty of a language. They are not unlike fumigations, which may be useful but are never able to check the spread of an epidemic disease. No pestilence can be checked without a thoroughly hygienical method of living, without clean dwellings, pure air, wholesome

food, healthy habits. In the same way, it is not by critical sifting and, I should say, behindhand pruning that we can stay the corruption of a language. When the moral and intellectual level of a people sinks, its language sinks therewith. What is important is a thorough mental and social hygiene. Let a people be independent, prosperous, educated and generous; then its language will be rich and varied and powerful; its words and idioms will fly like winged arrows, hitting the mark clear and sharp, bringing forth images of strength and beauty. On the other hand, when the mass of the people sink down into degradation and wretched misery, their language becomes poor, slow, coarse and dull. Their intellectual life is annihilated; how can they be expected to speak aptly neatly and richly?

Nowhere perhaps can we find better evidence of the influence of the political, moral and social conditions on language than in the Italian history. When Italy was dotted with prosperous and independent commonwealths, no nation in Europe could boast of a language so rich, so strong, so full of promise,

so vigorous, melodious and beautiful. It was Dante's language. When the thriving commonwealths were succeeded by those splendid principalities where little by little, amid the pomp of the courts, the splendor of arts, and the luxury of life, liberty was lulled to sleep, we find the language more polished, more refined, but lacking some of its Dantesque energy and honest simplicity. It was Ariosto's language. Later, when even the name of liberty had been suppressed, when the national tyrannies had given way to foreign dominations, and the people was ground down to the most abject misery, the language of Italian literature became of the great languages of Europe the most empty, the most insipid, flaccid and academic. Since the last part of the XVIIIth and more especially since the beginning of this century, when the wonderful movement began which culminated with the liberation and unification of Italy, a visible change has taken place in her language. Take at random two Italian prose-writers, one of the XVIIIth or XVIIth century and one of our days. The contrast is so striking that one would hardly believe it. The

present language of Italian literature is still somewhat uncertain and uneven, as all things that are in a transitory state. But there is life in it; it approaches more and more to the living language of the people, and there is no doubt that after a few generations it will again resume its place as one of the most beautiful and most perfect European speeches.

Language, then, is inseparable from the social and political fortunes of the people. Where a very small minority are rich and idle, and the masses are ground down by toil, ignorance and poverty, we must have on one side an artificial language, disingenuous, narrow and conventional—cant more than language; on the other side, a brutal, low, vulgar jargon, whose difference from the hothouse language of the upper classes will widen daily. Break these barriers, let welfare be as common as it is possible, and the level of public education will rise, the national mind will improve, the language will grow by the co-operation of all, rich and strong, the mirror of the mental activities of all, equally distant from the superfetations of fashionable cant, as from the vulgarity of slang. Let, then,

also for the sake of language, the movements be welcome which are now everywhere abroad, tending to beat down sophisms and hoary prejudices, trying to diffuse a moderate welfare among the greatest number possible. Every step taken in this direction will be recorded in the improvement of language.

THE END.

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